

PRESENCE AND RePRESENTATION

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Before the ridge of Serifos, as the sun rises, the guns of all the great world theories fall silent. The mind is overcome by a few waves and some rocks; absurd perhaps but nevertheless sufficient to reveal man in his true dimensions.

–O. Elytis, *Carte blanche*, trans. by David Connolly

INTRODUCTION

The act of representation is, to an extent, a *sine qua non* condition within the artistic process and always acquires its meaning in relation to a presence. Presence acts as an internal or external stimulus, and *re-presentation* is the effect of a presence. From this perspective, I have examined the work of Francis Bacon, Susan Hiller, Giorgio Morandi, Gerhard Richter, Iannis Xenakis, and, among others, the theories of Giorgio Agamben, Benjamin Buchloch, Daniel Chandler, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Hal Foster and Henri Lefebvre.

Within the frame of this enquiry, I have created a series of polyptychs exploring different possibilities, correlations and aspects of my topic. The internal or external stimulus for the creation of these series varies: from recorded video stills of London's urban scenery to a one-wave loop videotaped at a Greek coast, and from a specific architectural site to various landscapes – all painted in situ or from photographs. Although this variety calls for dissimilar creative strategies for each polyptych, all of them are connected with each other, as they share the following properties:

- the *openness*, which practically relativizes the beginning and the end of the artwork, the part and the whole, the real space–time and the imagery space–time,
- the *rhythm* (practically, its simplified form is repetition), as the element that makes the synthesis and unification of different states of presence possible – through the function of consonance,
- the *pictorial language* (i.e., colour, line, shape, etc.), as the intermediate between the individual and the collective evaluation of the artwork.

In the context of my semisite-specific practice, I reactivate the notion of topicality to approximate the foundation of a stable and real ground where the artwork forms and develops. By exploring the act of representation, I discuss the poetic metaphor *from* and *to* the real, the constitution of the real and its consequences on how we value art.

I argue that, both practically and theoretically, *rhythm* is identified through the principle of presence, and I examine rhythm as the methodological tool whose vibration penetrates practical experimentation and whose contents are susceptible to theoretical exploration. Odysseas Elytis' poem eloquently describes the experience that artists relish during the creative process – the poetic point of view. By the same token, art practice repulses a well established methodology, thus maintaining an entropy, or an openness. I put forward the hypothesis that rhythm can offer a sustainable methodological tool for art practice-based areas of study.

In my research, I explore the structure and limits of visual/pictorial language, that are simultaneously historical and physical. Practically, this exploration is correlated with a quest for *the proper* (proportion, colour, gesture, etc.) within my compositions – i.e., a search on artistic manipulation and its criteria of evaluation.

Finally, I investigate the theoretical context of *Presence and Representation*, its relation to *the real* and how different comprehensions correspond with and influence different viewpoints and theses, which, in turn, have personal and social consequences. As Daniel Chandler (1994) indicates, it is unavoidable to ask 'whose realities are privileged in particular representations', a recognition which eschews a retreat to mere subjectivism, as it 'pays due tribute to the unequal distribution of power in the social world.'

1. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL AND CREATIVE PRACTICE

1996-2003, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, BA painting.
2004-2008, Athens School of Fine Arts, BA sculpture.
2008-2009, Wimbledon College of Art, MA Fine Art: painting.

1.1. BA in Painting creative practice and theory

During both BA courses I engaged into a thorough exploration and study of the pictorial language and space. This exploration took place through the physical observation of the human figure and its surrounding space as it is interpreted, manipulated and transited in the pictorial space of the painting. The content and subject matter of my paintings was to be explored, negotiated and discovered through the process – or, better still, is this process itself.

This exploration would be based on colour and form, i.e., the pictorial vocabulary, and the relations and dynamics it formed within the context of the surrounding pictorial elements. During the representational process of the observed human figure, an elaboration of this kind (i.e., the continuous rearrangement of colour and form) had simultaneously and unavoidably an element of abstraction, as well as an element of figuration.



Figure 1
Untitled, 2003, oil on canvas, 180 x 120 cm

The development of my paintings had an organic character, as I would realize multiple readings of every part of the painting day after day, rearranging several times the form in relation to the continuously changing context of plastic relations in the flow of time. This process would give to the painting the essence of a palimpsest and a materiality that was the result of the insertion of multiple spaces and times in the same work, through its organic development.

Furthermore, even though the work had a relation/affinity to reality, it would simultaneously stand and bear a reality of its own, because of the interpretation of the artist and the obvious presence of the materials.

1.2. BA in Sculpture creative practice and theory

After finishing my BA in painting, I continued my studies in the field of sculpture. My studies in sculpture included works made of clay from observation of a model, then cast in plaster.

In painting I had already detected physicality caused by the way I was applying or removing the paint on the canvas and a tension for solid structural composition. Especially during the last period of my BA painting studies I had become particularly preoccupied with the limits of the canvas, the edges [the limits] of the pictorial space and the way they affect and are affected by the overall composition of the painting.

These preoccupations led me to expand my studies from the two-dimensional space of painting to the three-dimensional space of sculpture, that has, from its base, a physical character because of the gravity of its materials as well as its realization in the form of an object.

Through sculpture I could study issues of the plastic language that exist in painting as well, but in a more “mild” and hidden form. Such issues are the full and the void, the relation between the figured space as matter, in the case of the sculptural figure, and as air/void, in the case of its surrounding space, the presence and the absence, the elements of the positive and the negative space/form.

Additionally, through sculpture I could better explore the multiple aspects of view and the rhythm and movement that such a viewing produces in time. My exploration on these issues was realized in three dimensional figurative sculptures (see Appendix: *Image 5*) and concluded in the form of reliefs, that had an affinity with the two dimensional nature of painting (see *Figure 2*).



Figure 2
Untitled, 2006, clay, 50 x 35 x 5 cm

1.3. MA creative practice and theory

The central question which I explored during my MA research was the relation between the actual/preexisting space–time and the pictorial space–time. I initially started experimenting with an installation that combined different materials, some preexisting and rough and others fabricated and made by me: painting with oil colour, sculpting and curving on wooden boards nailed with actual nails on the wall, and a rough tree trunk on the floor whose shape corresponded to the composition and rhythm of the artifact on the wall (see Appendix: *Images 7-10*).



Figure 3
Polyptych I, 2008, oil paint and carving on wood, tree trunk, nails, 200 x 180 x 100 cm

The plastic gesture of combining a tree trunk as a preexisting piece of nature with the man-made elements initiated a dialogue between the actual preexisting elements and the pictorial elements. The form of the work deliberately remained open, as a continuous transposition from the one element to the other occurred.

In this work (see *Figure 3*), even though there was a dialogue between the essences of the preexisting and the pictorial, the pictorial space was not realized through the observation of a theme taken from the actual space. So the question of the relation between the actual/preexisting space and the pictorial space was not put as cogently as it could if the pictorial space had representational character.

For this reason, in order to reexamine the function of interpretation when creating a pictorial space through observation of reality, in a following painting I tried to make a self-sufficient painting (see *Figure 4*) protected and limited by a wooden frame that I cut and painted for this purpose. Thus, this sculptural element and its heavier material was restricted and restricting the edges of the pictorial space.

The question on the relation between the actual and the pictorial space was more decisively addressed at the work presented for the MA final examination, in which I integrated architectural elements with sculptural and pictorial ones (see *Figures 5, 6*, Appendix: *Images 12-18*).

In this installation called *Polyptych II* (where the preexisting space was a constitutive element of the total work presented) I realized an intense study of the constant dialogue that occurs when painting from observation between the actual and the pictorial elements. I explored how each of them affects the experience, perception and meaning of the other, as well as the spectrum of transformations from the one condition to the other.



Figure 4
Untitled, 2009, oil paint on canvas and wood,
30.5 x 30.5 cm

I worked in a large scale and initially adopted the materials and ways by which the existing architectural space was constructed. After a preparatory architectural drawing of the space, that I made in situ (see Appendix: *Image 12*), I placed six mdf white primed panels (in two groups of three) of dimensions 2m x 1m x 9mm with screws on two preexisting opposite white walls made as well from mdf panels. This first gesture was at the edge of being a gesture, as the nature of its outcome was very close to the nature of the preexisting space, but it was also an intervention in order to balance the structure of the space. In this way, the compositional process was manifest as a pursuit of balance that had to be regained in the work that would occupy the surface of three of the six white panels. On them I represented the existing space and myself (while observing and painting this space by standing at its center) as I observed them both directly and through the reflection on a mirror. The three primed panels were acting as an anchor to the three painted, carved and cut ones at the other side of the space, as they constituted the transitional point from the preexisting actual space to the pictorial one, and vice versa (see Appendix: *Images 13, 14*). In addition, the insertion of sculptural applications in the pictorial space, i.e., the carving, the cuttings and the use of screws to



Figure 5
Polyptych II, 2009, oil paint acrylic primer and carving on mdf wood, screws, 300 cm x 200 cm x 9 mm (x 2)

attach the pieces on the wall, as they naturally contain characteristics of the actual space (for example, more apparent materiality, the full and the void, three dimensions), they also constitute a transitional condition between the two spaces (see Appendix: *Images 15-18*).

In this process of painting/sculpting from observation and considering the surrounding space under observation as a constitutive element of the total work, the created/painted space gradually becomes perceived as part of the observed space itself, strengthening the relationship and the dialogue between the actual/objective and the created/subjective space. Furthermore, the spectrum of relations created between the two conditions and their meanings, were to be intensively experienced by the viewer as well, as the nature of the installation allows the viewer to become immersed in space, to confront and reflect in the flow of time on the reality of things.



Figure 6
Polyptych II, 2009, oil paint, acrylic primer, carving on mdf wood, screws, 300 cm x 200 cm x 9 mm

In this process of painting/sculpting from observation, and considering the surrounding space under observation as a constitutive element of the total work, the created/painted space gradually becomes perceived as part of the observed space itself, strengthening the relationship and the dialogue between the actual/objective and the created/subjective space. Furthermore, the spectrum of relations created between the two conditions and their meanings, were to be intensively experienced by the viewer as well, as the nature of installation allows the viewer to become immersed in space, to confront and reflect in the flow of time on the reality of things.

2. ARTISTS AND THEORISTS

Francis Bacon, Gerhard Richter and Giorgio Morandi follow different representational processes. I have chosen these specific three artists because each of them has developed his own approach to representation in relation to presence and the notion of the real. They all overcome the antithesis between abstraction and figuration, and renegotiate and question our perception and constitution of the real. In the framework of this enquiry, I also make reference to the works of Iannis Xenakis and Susan Hiller, and to the related theories of Gilles Deleuze, Hal Foster, Henri Lefebvre and Benjamin Buchloch. Furthermore, in the theoretical context section I discuss in depth the issues of pictorial/visual language and rhythm, which are essential in the context of *Presence and Representation* and the grounding of my research. My estimation is that the reference to some of the ideas of Daniel Chandler, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben will cast new light to the artworks, clarify key concepts and offer a different perspective to the present examination.

2.1. Francis Bacon and Gilles Deleuze

2.1.1. Sensation and the figural

A first important issue that interests me in Bacon is the fact that, despite the distortions and the physical presence of the paint, his work is not abstract, as there is always a recognizable figure, or – in Bacon’s terminology – a fact that is recorded (Sylvester, 1975, p. 58). But his work is neither illustrative or narrative, because of the way that this fact is visualized and modulated. A figure is readdressed not through an illustration but through a notion opposite to illustration, i.e., its distortion (see *Figure 7*). This is what Deleuze (2008, p. 2) presents as the opposition of the “figural” to the “figurative”.



Figure 7
Self-portrait, 1971,
oil on canvas, 35.5 x 30.5 cm

Bacon explains this opposition: ‘the difference is that an illustrational [figurative] form tells you through the intelligence immediately what the form is about, whereas a non-illustrational [figural] form works first upon sensation and then slowly leaks back into the fact’ (Sylvester, 1975, p. 56). **Sensation** from which the way of the non-illustrational, the non-figurative, the way of the figure derives is thoroughly presented by Deleuze (2008, p. 25):

Sensation has one face turned towards the subject (the nervous system, vital movement, “instinct”, temperament...) and one face turned toward the object (the fact, the place, the event). Or rather [...] it is both things indissolubly, it is Being-in-the-World, as phenomenologists say: at one and the same time I *become* in the sensation and something *happens* through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other.

2.1.2. Chance in Bacon's method

Bacon manages to activate sensation, achieve the figural (=the way of the figure) and overcome the figurative/illustrational. He does this by inserting “chance” in his method. Trying to put aside all his preconceptions and figurative givens, his first marks and strokes on the canvas are accidental. For him, figure is the improbable itself and ‘this manipulated chance [is] opposed to conceived or seen probabilities. [...] A probable visual whole (first figuration) has been disorganized and deformed by free manual traits which, by being reinjected into the whole, will produce the improbable visual figure (second figuration)’ (Deleuze, 2008, p. 66). By his method, apart from the illustrational, he overcomes pure abstraction as well.

2.1.3. Rhythm

Bacon's system and method elaborate three simultaneous elements of painting, that can be clarified/described with the help of sculptural terminology (Deleuze, 2008, p. 4), which I find very interesting as I constantly reflect on the dialogue between painting and sculpture:

- the armature or material structure (bone),
- the pedestal or contour (mobile),
- the figure (flesh).

On top of the structure, the contour and the figural forces take place. Systolic movements that come from the structure pressure the figure and at the same time diastolic ones go the opposite direction. The contour between them assures the communication among them. The coexistence of all these forces and movements produce the rhythm, that is the vital power of sensation (Deleuze, 2008, p. 30) (see *Figure 8*).

‘Force is closely related to sensation: For a sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on a body, on a point of the wave’ (Deleuze, 2008, p. 40). The primary function of the figures in Bacon's work is, exactly, to make invisible forces (like pressure, inertia, weight, attraction, gravitation, germination) visible, and ‘it is the rhythm itself that would become the figure, that would constitute the figure’ (Deleuze, 2008, p. 50).



Figure 8
Sweeney Agonistes, 1967, 146.5 x 198 cm

Empirically, in Bacon's work we perceive three rhythms: '[...] an "active" rhythm, with an increasing variation or amplification, then a "passive" rhythm, with a decreasing variation or elimination, and, finally, the attendant rhythm', i.e., the constant one. Pictorially, we usually recognize the first two as verticals in a descending–rising opposition, a diastolic–systolic opposition, a naked–clothed opposition and an augmentation–diminution opposition, and the attendant rhythm as horizontal, which 'defines a rhythm that is retrogradable in itself, thus without increase or decrease' (Deleuze, 2008, p. 54).

The importance of this Deleuzian examination lies in the fact that it closely relates theory with practice. The analysis of Bacon's artwork and his process reflects on my preoccupation with the presence of the figure in painting and on my interest in the figural, as opposed to the figurative, that is organically related with the making process of the work and the wider notion of rhythm as an essential element of the nature of the artwork.

2.2. Gerhard Richter and Hal Foster

My interest in Gerhard Richter's contemporary painting lies in the use of photography as vital research material and in the opposition of the elements of abstraction and representation in his work.

Richter accepts the *dominance* of photography in contemporary reality. 'Photographs are almost nature,' he notes (2005, p. 187). Hal Foster poses the question if this dependence suggests that 'our very sensorium, memory and unconscious have become, at least in part, "photogenic" in semblance' (Foster, 2003, p. 123). Has our modern world a photographic and digital face? Richter depends on photography as a source material, but reflects on the above question in his painting through the opposition between representation and abstraction throughout his work.

It is very interesting for me how he manages to produce 'a piercing referentiality out of flimsy representation' (Foster, 2003, p. 127). That is the point where the contradictions that appear in his work meet, and a third factor/condition is produced, that finds its place between representation and its destruction, between the manipulation of resemblance of appearance and apprehension of appearance. This condition is expressed mainly by the effect of blurring.

A series of works entitled *Mother with Child*, indicative of these contradictions, were made in 1995 (see *Figure 9*). As he says (2005, p. 226), 'Something had to be shown and simultaneously not shown', and the blurriness helps 'in order perhaps to say something else again, a third thing.'

For Richter (2005, p. 227), 'the picture is the depiction, and painting is the technique for shattering it.' Which is to say that 'photography delivers a resemblance (it merely "sees" objects) that the painting can – indeed, for Richter must – open up so that semblance might be revealed, "apprehended"' (Foster, 2003, p. 127). 'In this sense, semblance is less appearance than our apprehension of appearance, it is about human perception, embodiment, and agency – not as they are for all time but precisely as they are altered by social change and technological transformation' (Foster, 2003, p. 126).



Figure 9
Mother with child, 1995,
oil on canvas, 36 x 51 cm

The accumulation of photographs in the contemporary world is said to be an attempt to banish the recollection of death. But Baudrillard (1998, p. 236) believes the truth is that the object of photography 'becomes the site of absence and disappearance of the subject.' Given all this, the hypothesis that Richter paints from photography and depicts it through the blurring technique 'to reveal the deathliness of this photographic face [of the world] and to render the photographic mnemonic in painting, as painting' (Foster, 2003, p. 120) can be valid.

It can be said that in Richter's work recognition and disavowal, exposure and concealment meet, and the reconciliation of the opposites can be found in the "shiny blurs" which, as Foster puts it (2003, p.131) 'reflect on the vicissitudes of the *Shein* (= *light* in German) in modern times.'



2.3. Representation and the real

A basic path of my inquiry on *Presence and Representation* concerns their function in the constitution of **the real**, aiming to reevaluate their meaning. This questioning involves a practical and a theoretical analysis of the **visual language**, trying to detect the hidden conventions.

Umberto Eco argues that ‘through familiarity an iconic signifier can acquire primacy over its signified. Such a sign becomes conventional step by step, the more its addressee becomes acquainted with it. At a certain point the iconic representation, however stylized it may be, appears to be more true than the real experience, and people begin to look at things through the glasses of iconic convention’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). Jean Baudrillard in his paradigm of Disney/land (1994, p. 12) informs us about how deep this iconic convention goes: ‘Disney/land is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of **saving the reality principle**¹.’

The examination of this faculty of convention and the consequent replacement of the real by mute images, by the ‘present without presence’, is what Lefebvre (2004, p. 39) named *le dressage*: ‘To enter into a society, group or nationality is to accept values (that are taught), to learn a trade by following the right channels, but also to bend oneself (to be bent) to its ways. Which means to say: *dressage*’. The inherent and endogenous rhythmical element of the visual language contains conventional rhythms. ‘The sciences of dressage take account of many aspects and elements: duration, harshness, punishments and rewards. Thus rhythms compose themselves. [...] **Dressage determines the majority of rhythms**’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 40). In this context, the adoption of rhythm as a methodological tool – both theoretical and practical – in my research becomes apparent.

According to Pierce’s model of the sign, reality can only be known via signs. ‘If representations are our only access to reality, determining their accuracy is a critical issue. Pierce adopted from logic the notion of **modality** to refer to the truth value of a sign’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). I theoretically and practically examine the relevance of contemporary critical discourse to *representation* and associate it with older considerations such as Aristotle’s, who expresses the view (*Metaphysics*, i, 6.4) that, ‘things exist in their plurality by participation in (μέθεξις [methexis]) the forms after which they are named, that to say that they exist by *imitation* or exist by *participation* is no more than a use of different words to say the same thing.’ In the Aristotelian terminology, ‘Form (=εἶδος [eidos] as ἰδέα [idea]) and presentation (=φαινόμενον [phenomenon]) are *nama* (name, quiddity) and *rupa* (shape, appearance, body); or in the special case of verbal expressions, *artha* (meaning, value) and *sabda* (sound); the former being the intellectual (*manasa*, νοητός) and the latter the tangible or aesthetic (sprsya, drsya, αισθητικός, ορατός) apprehensions’ (Coomaraswamy, 1981, p. 144).

Such would be, according to Jean Baudrillard, the complex implications of representation and its relation to reality in successive phases of the image:

- It is the reflection of a profound reality;

¹ The emphasis with bold letters, here as well as throughout the whole paper, is added by me.

- it masks and denatures a profound reality;
- it masks the *absence* of a profound reality;
- it has no relation to any reality whatsoever, it is its own pure simulacrum.

‘In the first case, the image is a *good* appearance – representation is of the sacramental order. In the second, it is an evil appearance – it is of the order of maleficence. In the third, it plays at being an appearance – it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer of the order of appearances, but of simulation’ (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6).

2.4. Gerhard Richter’s colour chart images

I insisted on and continued the research that I had initiated last year on Gerhard Richter and his critique on the mediation of the creative process. This year I concentrated on his series of *Colour charts* (see Figure 10), which, apart from the apparent relation with the colour charts that I use in my work, ‘represent a middle point, in the sense of a point of indifference, between photographic and painterly means, establishing a more direct relationship to **the problematic of visual per se**’ (Osborne, 1998, p. 97).

For Peter Osborne (1998, p. 99), “image” is the most appropriate word to refer to Richter’s work, as ‘It is the virtue of the notion of the image that it combines the aesthetic, spatiotemporal concretion of an object of sight with the element of abstraction inherent in ideas. [...] an image has always been a visual presentation of reality, at once sensuous and particular, ideal and abstract.’



Figure 10
One of the 25 colours series, 2007
enamel on alu-dibond, 48.7 x 48.7 cm

The split that the theoretician observes between aesthetics and semiotics reconnects, in a peculiar manner, the contemporary critique with the older considerations on representation described by Aristotle. ‘Aesthetics and semiotics are the torn, antinomic halves of the artwork between which contemporary art theory shuttles back and forth, in a decidedly non-dialectical oscillation. This historical split, internal to the theoretical comprehension of the image – a split between **meaning** and **sensibility** [*artha* and *sabda*, or, *ιδέα* and *φαινόμενον*, respectively] *signification* and *aesthesis* – registers both the changing social function of images consequent upon the declining power of the church (desacralization and commodified reenchantment) and the development of new technologies of image production. It forms the background to Richter’s art. Indeed, it is to a great extent its content: what it is about’ (Osborne, 1998, p. 100).

It can be said that in Richter’s work, recognition and disavowal, exposure and concealment meet, and the reconciliation of the opposites can be found in the “shiny blurs” which, as Hal Foster puts it, ‘reflect on the vicissitudes of the *Shein* (= *light* in German) in modern times’ (Foster, 2003, p. 131). Richter introduces a new kind of image space within his creative strategy, as he highlights ‘both the aesthetic dimension of the denotative aspect of the photograph (the aesthetic dimension of semiosis) and the mechanical reproductive (semiotic) quality of the painterly image, through the literal mapping of the painterly onto the photographic image, in a speculative identity which produces a qualitatively new kind of image space’ (Osborne, 1998, p. 103).

The directional manner that guides my creative process for the completion of the work *Polyptych IV* allows the reproduction of an unlimited number of the units, which may produce an unlimited number of compositions, and the production of unlimited combinations of the both technically and manually produced pixels glued on each unit. In this way, I identify a connection with what Osborne mentions (1998, p. 109) about a ‘modification of Benjamin’s opposition of reproduction to the aura.’

I cite here the quotation from Adorno’s *Aesthetic theory*, as it offers me a stimulus in order to make further progress in my research inquiry:

“There is an obvious qualitative leap between the hand that draws an animal on the wall of a cave and the camera that makes it possible for the same image to appear simultaneously at innumerable places. But the objectivation [*Objektivierung*] of the cave drawing vis-à-vis what is unmediatedly seen *already contains the potential* of the technical procedure that effects the separation of what is seen from the subjective act of seeing. Each work, insofar as it is intended for many, is already its own reproduction.” (Osborne, 1998, p. 109)

This constitutes reproducibility as “the ground of iconicity”; reproducibility produces resemblance.

In my practice, the chart compositional arrangement also refers to the traditional conception of such orientation manifested in the chess board. It is a different generation of numerical organization of the surface than that of Richter’s, where he worked out a system with a continual subdivision (differentiation) through equal gradations. $4 \times 4 = 16$ $4 \times 4 = 64$ $4 \times 4 = 256$ $4 \times 4 = 1,024$.

The chessboard formation represents the world and it is related to ‘a mathematical equation revealing the inner connection between freedom of action and the inevitability of fate [the notion of chance, possibility and freedom has been explored by all three artists discussed in my research, i.e., Xenakis, Richter and Bacon]. [...] It is a simplified representation of the cosmic cycles, which are reproduced in a geometrical scheme on the chessboard. The four center squares of the chessboard represent the four basic phases of all cycles, ages as well as seasons. The squares immediately surrounding them correspond to the orbit of the sun, or the twelve signs of the zodiac, while the outer rim of squares represent the twenty eight houses of the moon. The alternatives of black and white is like that of day and night. The whole square board, which the Indians call *asthapada*, with its squares of eight by eight, is a “congelation” of the cosmic movements, which unfold in time – it is the world’ (Burckhardt, 1972, p. 118) (see *Figure 11*).

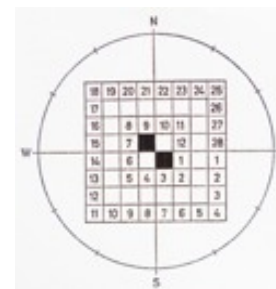
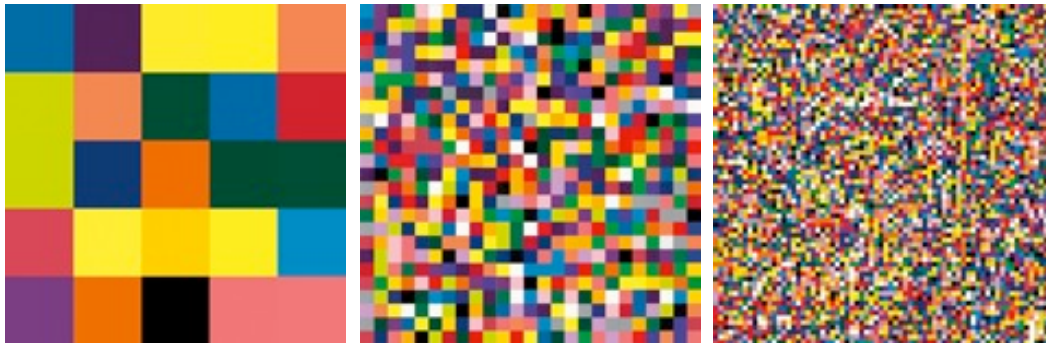


Figure 11
The geometrical scheme
of the chess board

2.5. Gerhard Richter's 4900 colours

*'The concept is really **chance**. The possibility to produce paintings that I haven't made.'*

(Richter, 2008, p. 117)



Gerhard Richter's work *4900 colours* forms a paradigm of a basic strand of his creative process and research, that exemplifies the operation of chance in the production of the artwork. With the adoption of a systematic incorporation of chance in *4900 colours*, Richter problematizes and questions the mastership of *the author*; thus removing the *subjective* compositional preferences of the artist and desubjectivising painting. Additionally, reciting Theodor Adorno's "radical negativity", Richter 'denied the credibility of any traditional form of **cultural representation** that claims to articulate and mediate subjective experience' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 69).

Historically, the particular artwork is placed by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh within the general "abstract art" category as a "diagrammatic abstraction", where 'abstraction becomes a purely quantitative regime and functions as a schema of data collection and registration' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 66). 'The diagram [contributes] a dissenting voice to the heroic chorus of abstraction, recognizing the degree to which the painter and the spectator as perceptual and desiring subjects are always already contained in systems of spatiotemporal **quantification**¹ – an episteme of control and statistical registration. Thus diagrammatic abstraction records the forms of the disenchantment of the world, the subject's submission to legal and administrative control' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 64).

Diagrammatic abstraction betrays an affinity with deconstructional strategies, as it opposes abstraction's traditional transcendence (i.e., the metaphysical reading of signification) and rejects the 'myth of painterly subjectivity in favor of an emphatic foregrounding of a pre-existing, external structural determination' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 68). Furthermore, testifying to this affinity, 'Richter's *4900 colours* confronts us with the conundrum of a possibly endless repetition of the same and a potentially endless accumulation of difference'² (Richter, 2008). The colour chart paintings are 'eradicating any **hierarchy of subject**³ or representational intent and focusing on

¹ Quantification in mathematics and in empirical science is the act of counting and measuring that transforms human sense observations and experiences into members of some sets of numbers.

² Cf. the *différance/trace* concept of Jacques Derrida in the theoretical context section.

³ It may be beneficial if this is seen in the light of the Derridean endless deferment-differentiation of *différance*, i.e., *archi-trace*: 'Probabilistic or not, the perception of chance [in *4900 colours*] acknowledges scansions of time, while the subject defines itself through the introduction of the temporal, an **interval**' (Richter, 2008, p. 128).

colour to create an egalitarian **language** of art' (Richter, 2008, p. 7). The syntax of the grid formation of *4900 colours* and its units modulation and continuous re-contextualization of the overall text comply with my personal practical investigations that are translated into the polyptych compositional arrangement⁴ and the modules of the *Polyptych IV* project (see *Figure 12*, Appendix: *Images 31-35*). In effect, this strategy tests the **literalness** of the visual language. 'In his colour charts Richter made as much recourse to the aesthetic of trivial anonymity and the motley colours of Pop Art as he did to the reductionist principles of a visual language reduced to impersonal, neutral and lapidary forms, the literalism of Minimal Art – the strategies in both cases being **serial**' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, note 11, p. 130). In charts like Richter's, that have become modular, Pelzer wonders, 'where is the whole? Depending on the version, the independent parts can be separated and then reunited. In this whole of fixed yet unlimited form, there is and there isn't a whole. Richter disassociates the idea of all from the whole' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 125).

The quest (on Richter's behalf) of an open⁵ elaboration of the work stemmed from an acceptance of the priority of a shifting signified. According to Pelzer, 'If the work exists as a concept, Richter adds that in its appearance as a visual phenomenon, it is **different every time**, and that it matters to him to find a form allowing for this dissemblance, this oddness within the 11 versions of *4900colours*' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 117). This Richter's statement inevitably entails and reflects a preconception of *presence* (the concept) and its *representation* (the appearance as a visual phenomenon) and exemplifies the mode of their coherent introduction.

Chance, that, for Birgit Pelzer, 'allowed [Richter] to take on his age-old adversaries, uncertainty and arbitrariness' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 117), points at the argumentation on the arbitrariness of the signifier, originating from the early semiotical analysis. The strategy to overcome this arbitrariness is 'by putting powerlessness in a position to act, [so that it] could fight the indeterminate on its own grounds, using its own weapons'⁶ (Richter, 2008).



Figure 12
The computer generated numbers
for the 25 colours in 4900 colours

⁴ Cf. the notation on Derrida at the end of the paragraph dedicated to him in the theoretical context section, as well as the greek movie *To pithari*, and especially Veggos' poem, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVZXTJAgMpl>.

⁵ Cf. Agamben's (1999, p. 66) definition of the "open": "Open work" means: work that does not possess itself in its own *εἶδος* as in its end, work that is never at work, that is (if it is true that work is *ἐνέργεια*), nonwork, *δύναμις*, availability, and potentiality.'

⁶ Cf. the entropy registration in the theoretical context section.

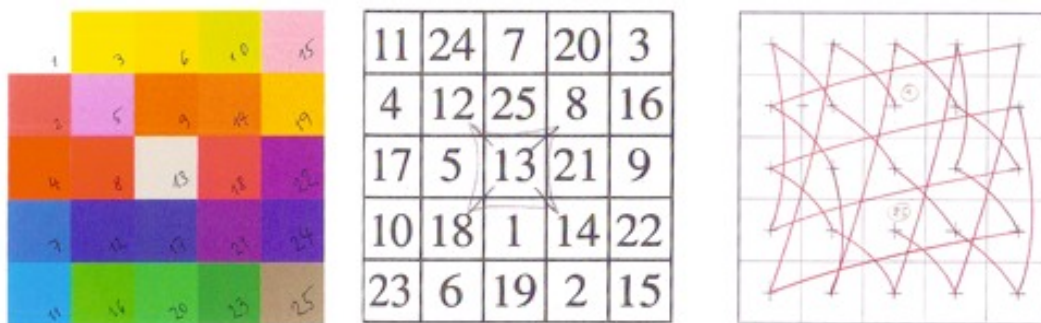


Figure 13
The 25 colour scale for 4900 colours, the magic square and diagram of the sequence of numbers in the magic square

Richter's parallel investigation of chance application during the creative process involves, in Pelzer's words, 'an appeal to numeric chance', where he 'renders visible a logical numbered writing, a combination disconnected from any noticeable proof. We are faced with a literal formalisation of colour. [...] **To formalise is to reduce to the syntactic.** In the colours that are reduced to a number there is no longer call for sensitive intuition but for wavelengths' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 123).

Alain Badiou (2008, p. 3) states that 'number governs cultural representations. [...] It is in its very essence that the cultural fabric is woven by number alone. A cultural fact is a numerical fact.'⁷ According to Pelzer, 'The power of the programmed numbered formula is that it is wordless, beyond dialogue. The algorithm acts, it works. The computer obeys, operating like an automaton with its cold indifference. Numbering brackets the question of meaning, of the address, of the destination. The language is that of the computer programme. It encodes, puts in order, combines, moves and repeats the 25 colours. It proposes continuities, redundancies and exclusions according to its semantics. The result is close to a visual language, with its syntax, its vocabulary reduced to 25 colours. A strange state of visual language' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 126). This visual language incorporates number theorizing and practical application, i.e., the distribution of the compositional units. 'This definitive stature of numbering [...] results in a transformation of our rapport with reality' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, note 10, p. 130).

As 'appearance cannot put itself in order from nothing, but from something that **presents** itself as a kind of articulation [=the nexus of the text], which in this case is a combination of 25 colours', it may be argued that this kind of desubjectified – chance-processed – presence is 'turned toward nothingness. [...] Availability-toward-nothingness, although it is not yet work, is in some way a **negative presence**, a shadow of being-at-work: it is ~~everywhere~~ **work**, and as such constitutes the most urgent critical appeal that the artistic consciousness of our time has expressed toward the alienated essence of the work of art' (Agamben, 1999, p. 67).

As Pelzer puts it, chance 'becomes the method of selection of colours in an integrated principle of equivalence' (Buchloh *et al.*, 2008, p. 119). Derrida, whose deconstructive theory consisted of an assault on the visual – as a form of presence that his idea of spacing as an aspect of deferral (or *différance*) was meant to dismantle – often invented surprisingly effective visual metaphors for his concepts. For example, the insertion of Mallarmé's *Mimique* into a corner of Plato's *Philebus* suggests, visually, the idea of the fold [=ptych], or redoubling, that Derrida produces as a new

⁷ Cf. the chapter about Xenakis and the 0 subsection in the theoretical context section.

concept of mimesis, in which the double (or second-order copy) doubles no single (or original). Another example occurs in the essay *The parergon*, where a succession of graphic frames is interspersed throughout a text focused on the function of **the frame** of the work of art, a frame that attempts to essentialize the work as **autonomous** but which does nothing more than connect it to its context or nonwork (Buchloch et al., 2008, p. 46).

2.6. Giorgio Morandi, Arthur Danto and Mathew Gale

In the last few years there has been a renewed interest in Morandi's work, and many contemporary artists refer in different ways to his work; to the notions of collection and archive related to the process of his work and the spatiotemporal character of his artistic vocabulary. A recent example of this association can be demonstrated in the exhibition *Passing thoughts and making plans* at the Jerwood place, where three of the artists, Tacita Dean, Rachel Whiteread and Cornelia Parker, have evidently linked their practice with Morandi's work, verifying the contemporary relevance of his art.

It is very interesting to me that his work is characterized by a progressive move towards a kind of abstraction that is developed through and connected to observation (see *Figure 15*). His saying that 'nothing is more abstract than reality' shows his reflection on the real and reveals the way he regarded painting, which goes beyond a mere representation of objects. His painting is an 'ontological investigation of the act of making' (Gale and De Salvo, 2001, p. 15), an investigation of the "basics of art".

It is essential that the theoretical analysis of his vocabulary has mainly been attempted through the notions of space and time. Cornelia Parker notes, '[...] Somehow, the narrowing of focus, the limited tonal range, the repetitive exploration of the most ordinary of objects, all add up to the creation of an immense space for projection' (Gale and De Salvo, 2001, p. 60).

The spatiotemporal characteristics in his work are very closely related to his process, starting from the preparatory stage, when he arranges the objects in space, on the several tables he used. After each arrangement that he made on a table, he would mark the position of each bottle on the horizontal plane. In a future arrangement he would move some of the bottles to other positions or out of the arrangement, and he would put others on the "stage", keeping one or some in the exact previous position. Then he would re-mark their position in the horizontal plane. In this way he was creating a palimpsest in space that would reflect the temporal aspect of his compositions (see *Figure 14*).

This arrangement would often coincide with applying a coat of paint over the actual objects, so there is an in-between stage of painting among the actual objects in space and the painting on the canvas. 'The process through which Morandi built up his compositions is traced through a step by step discussion of the passage from arrangement to finished painting' (Gale and De Salvo, 2001, p. 86). This methodology generates a history of displacement and a history of

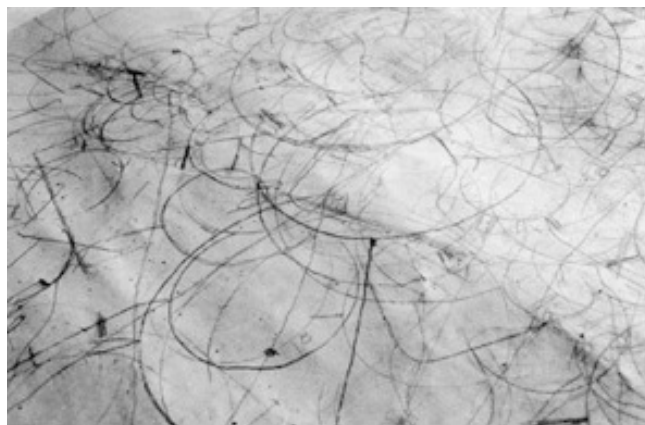


Figure 14
Morandi's spatiotemporal palimpsest

simultaneity, that can be found in his process of arrangement as well as in the compositions of the finished painting themselves, where ‘the same bottle [...] occupies two different spots in the same composition’ (Danto, 2008, p. 36) (see *Figure 14*, Appendix: *Image 20*).

Morandi’s process to record and keep an archive of the spatiotemporal changes of his arrangements of objects and different conditions of light, together with the scholar’s critical discourse on this strategy, influenced the generation of my archival recordings and the way I intend to use them as a tool in my research methodology.

I have examined the work of Francis Bacon, Gerhard Richter and Giorgio Morandi in order to understand the way they overcome the antithesis between abstraction and figuration in their different representational processes. They all renegotiate and question our perception and constitution of the real.



Figure 15
Still life, 1947

2.7. Iannis Xenakis, Henri Lefebvre and rhythm

In continuation of my previous research on rhythm, I initiated a research on the work of the composer and architect Iannis Xenakis. His explorations on the relationship between music and architecture, which were manifested by composing music for specific locations and architectural buildings, and designing buildings to host specific musical compositions (see *Figure 16*), open up new perspectives for my questioning on *Presence and Representation* and my interdisciplinary practice.



Figure 16
Iannis Xenakis / Le Corbusier,
model of the Philips pavilion,
1958

Xenakis used the term *polytope* to describe his audiovisual installations. ‘The term *polytope* captures the complexity of the spatial designs and multiple spaces of this unusual light-and-sound works’ (Harley, 1998, p. 55). The spatial properties of sound were at the centre of his explorations and are exemplified in the creation of the sonic “spatial relief”. In the elaboration of his projects he used the language of mathematics and geometry – points, lines and surfaces – to discuss aural phenomena (see *Figure 17*). These investigations are ‘examples to demonstrate how an auditory space could be structured by means of abstract morphological principles’ (Harley, 1998, p. 56). The element of representation is manifested in various projects and sketches, such as the *Anemone* (see *Figure 18*), a distant resemblance of a natural phenomenon. The *Anemone* sketch represents a light pattern for the *Polytope de Cluny*. ‘The pattern is created by laser beams reflecting off mirrors placed on the scaffolding in the performance space. As the position of these mirrors shifted, so did the shapes of the anemones’ (Harley, 1998, p. 60). I initiated such an exploration in the work *Polyptych IV*, in which I use a representational element (the sea waves), along with geometry elements (points, lines and surfaces), as well as a rhythmical analysis to discuss optical phenomena.



Figure 17
Drawing for the work *Achorripsis*, 1957

Lefebvre (2004, p. 17) classifies rhythms ‘by crossing the notion of rhythm with those of the secret and public, the external and internal’, and Xenakis’ installations in specific locations (Montreal, Persepolis, Mycenae) seem to fulfill the criteria of all Lefebvre’s (2004, p. 18) categorizations:

- a) **Secret rhythms:** First, physiological rhythms, but also psychological ones (recollection and memory, the said and the non-said, etc.).
- b) **Public** (therefore social) **rhythms:** Calendars, fetes, ceremonies and celebrations; or those that one declares and those that one exhibits as *virtuality*, as expression (digestion, tiredness, etc.).
- c) **Fictional rhythms:** Eloquence and verbal rhythms, but also elegance, gestures and learning processes. Those which are related to false secrets, or pseudo-dissimulations (short-, medium- and long-term calculations and estimations). The imaginary!
- d) **Dominating-dominated rhythms:** Completely

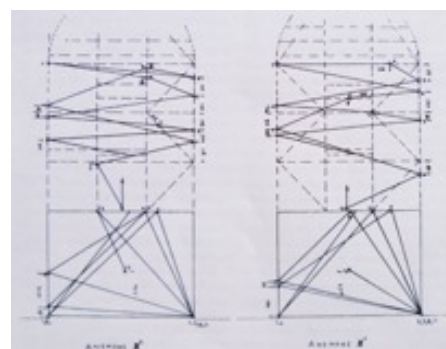


Figure 18
Anemone, drawing for the work
Polytope de Cluny, 1972

made up; everyday or long lasting, in music or in speech, aiming for an effect that is beyond themselves.

The relation of rhythm with music is self-evident. ‘Music integrates the functions, the **values** of Rhythm’. (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 66). Xenakis applied a *logistic distribution* ‘to create the musical form, rhythmic transformations, complex timbres and the variable streams of pitch-and-intensity patterns he called *tresses rythmiques* (rhythmic strands)’ (Harley, 1998, p. 61).

I detect a link between the description of Xenakis’ work *Pithoprakta* and its rhythmical analysis, and the Deleuzean analysis on rhythm that is inspired by Bacon’s work. *Pithoprakta* (see Figure 19) is a rendition of a musical code to a different code, thus **visualizing the sonic**. Towards the top of the vertical axis acerb sounds are positioned, and towards the bottom of the vertical axis roll sounds. At the horizontal axis time is indicated. Thus a point on this two-dimensional space signifies an instantaneous sound without temporal extension or sonic differentiation, the *pizzicato* in musical terminology. A sound that outlasts for a definite temporal period without sonic differentiations is represented with a horizontal line. An ascending or descending diagonal line represents a *glissando*, i.e., a differentiated sound. All these calculations are made for each instrument of the orchestra.

Deleuze (2008, p. 54) observes:

[...] an “active” rhythm, with an increasing variation or amplification, then a “passive” rhythm with a decreasing variation or elimination, and finally, the “attendant” rhythm, i.e., the constant one. Pictorially we usually recognize the first two as verticals in a descending–rising opposition, a diastolic–systolic opposition, a naked–clothed opposition and an augmentation–diminution opposition [...] and the attendant rhythm as horizontal that defines a rhythm that is retrogradable in itself, thus without increase or decrease. (Deleuze, 2008, p. 54)

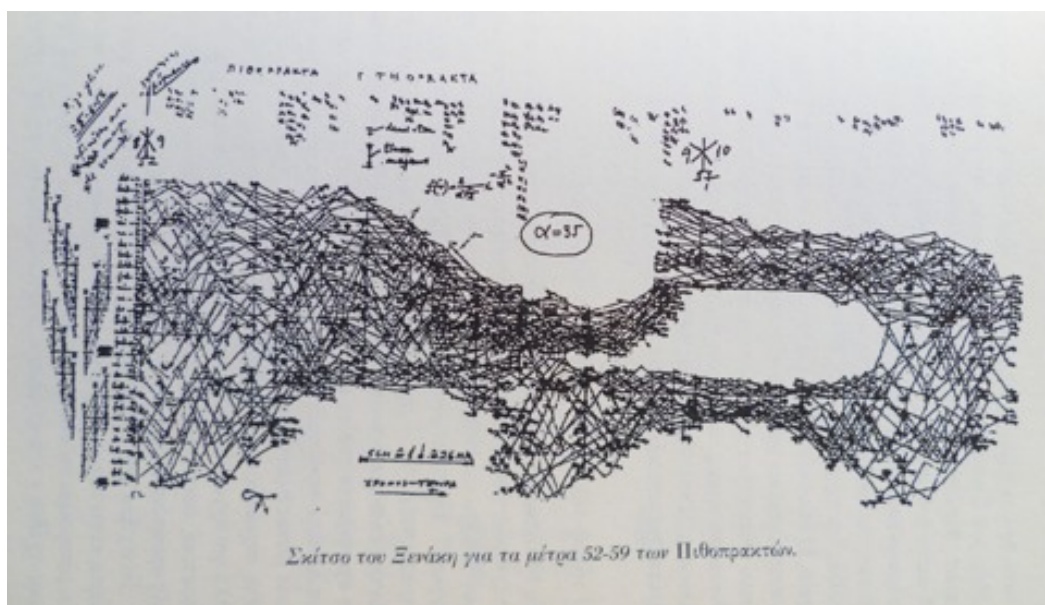


Figure 19
Drawing for the work *Pithoprakta*, 1955-56

2.8. Susan Hiller

'You've never seen me, you don't know that we're civilized nation, we have beautiful language.'
(Gallagher, 2011, p. 34)

My personal interest on Susan Hiller's work lies on her overall interdisciplinary approach and methodology, as she often adopts the role of the artist as a curator, reinstating, inter alia, questions of authorship, the interrelationship between image and text/language and reality, in an effort 'to make the invisible visible' (Gallagher, 2011, p. 20).

Specifically, I focus on the **nexus**¹ of Hiller's visual language – its articulations, metaphors and transpositions – retaining the “*idiosyncratic nature*” of the cultural artifacts.² ‘Hiller brought with her from anthropology a **methodology** rather than any specific theory. When she uses cultural artifacts, from potshards to postcards, she does not project meanings onto them but retains their “*idiosyncratic nature*” which affects the way they are perceived and illuminates their significance in relation to our own culture – something most anthropologists ignore and of which most artists are ignorant’ (Gallagher, 2011, p. 12).

Hiller developed a “*taxonomic method*” of presentation, ‘indicative of [her] interest in museological traditions of display’ (Gallagher, 2011, p. 13), which I relate to my elaboration of polyptychs, and especially to their “*specificity*” (*the*

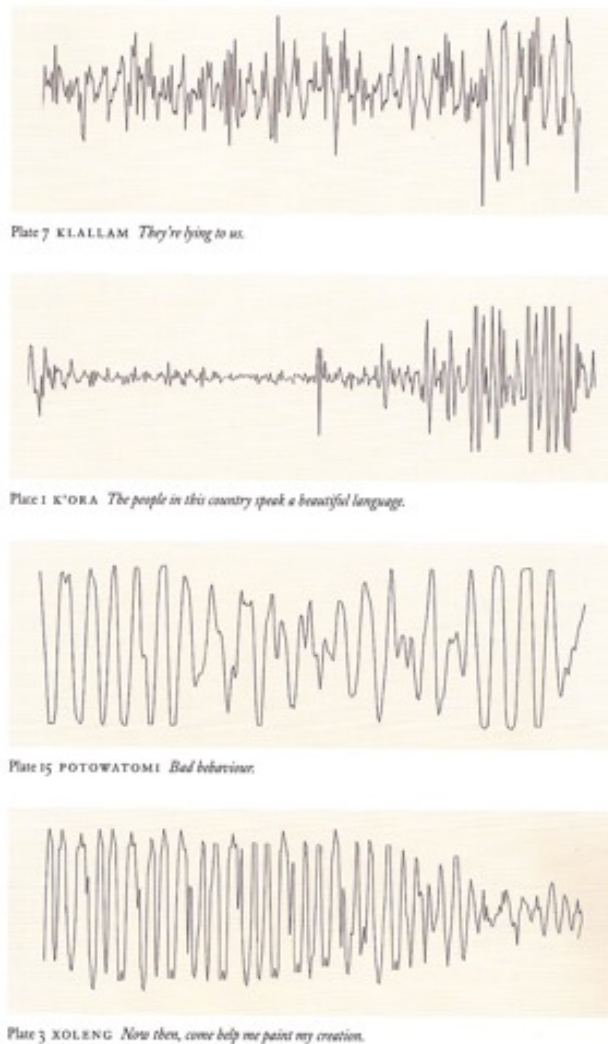


Figure 20
The last silent movie, 2007, single channel projection with sound, 20 min; 24 etchings on paper based upon oscilloscope traces of the voices heard on the soundtrack, each 37 x 42,5 cm

¹ Cf. the related to the text/textile paragraph in the theoretical context section.

² Cf. Hiller's *montage* practice and editing, as well as her “coagulated” **fragments** – ‘Yes, I am interested in fragments of films’ (Gallagher, 2011, p. 33).

literal) and Richter's visual syntax.³ Her artistic enterprise, in accordance with my personal creative practice, 'was also reluctant to eliminate materiality or any suggestion of craft from the artwork. She began to develop strategies that reconciled these opposing impulses' (Gallagher, 2011, p. 14).

On top of that, the research on Hiller's work informs the evolution of the **rhythm** concept which I use in many instances, both in theoretical analysis and practical application, reexamining the endless reformation of (visual) language, i.e., its entanglement with the reality (see Figure 20).

In her work *The last silent movie* Hiller acknowledges rhythm as 'a very important aspect of this work, the way the speech rhythm controls the visual rhythm' (Gallagher, 2011, p. 34). The acoustic traces transcribed on paper by the oscilloscope traces of the voices are comparable, inter alia, with Iannis Xenakis' permutations between senses and the metre studies of basic rhythmic structure of a verse or lines in poetry.⁴ Important to this research is the consideration and rethinking of the in-between, the gap, the pause, the interval, the white page – an articulation of rhythm as in the etymological sense.⁵

In the ancient Greek description of rhythm can be found early traces of the modern linguistic analysis of word function as **difference** relevant to a big area of Hiller's research (see Figure 21). 'In the first book of *Metaphysics* (985b), Aristotle, explaining the theory of the atomists, who put emptiness and fullness at the origin and derived all things from them by way of "difference," says that according to Leucippus and Democritus this "difference" had three species – *ρυσμός και διαθιγή*

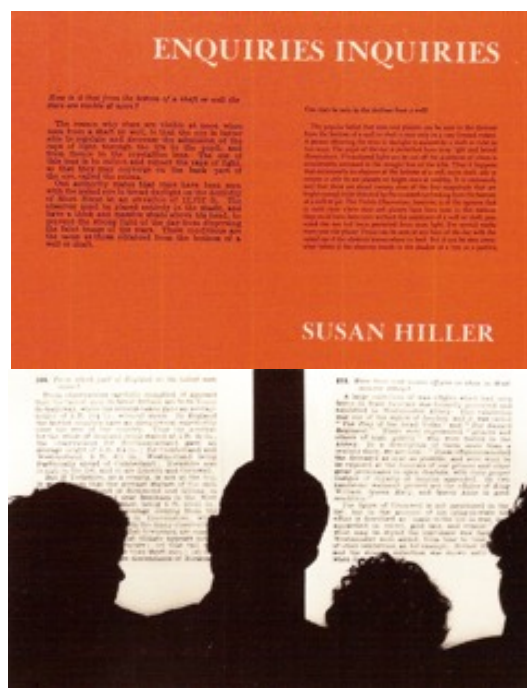


Figure 21
Enquiries/Inquiries, 1973,
2 carousels, each with 80 slides

³ Cf. the chapters about Richter.

⁴ Cf. Aris Retsos' research on Greek ancient *μετρική* (metre), at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTNekOYh3mQ>.

⁵ *ῥυθμός*, Ion. *ῥυσμός* (v. infr. III, IV), *ῥ*: (*ῥέω*):

A. any regular recurring motion

I. measured motion, time, whether in sound or motion,

2. special phrases: *εν ρυθμῷ*, in time, of dancing, marching, etc., *εν τῷ ρυθμῷ αναπνεῖν*, respire regularly, *Arist.Pr.882b1*

II. measure, proportion or symmetry of parts, at rest as well as in motion

III. generally, proportion, arrangement, order

IV. state or condition of anything, temper, disposition

V. form, shape of a thing, *Democr.5i*; identified by *Arist.* with *σχῆμα*, *Metaph.985b16,1042b14*; *μετέβαλον τον ρ. των γραμμάτων*, changed the form or shape of the letters, *Hdt.5.58*

VI. manner, fashion of a thing.

(Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English lexicon*, at www.perseus.tufts.edu)

Also cf. the presence-absence dipole in the chapters about Richter.

και τροπή – and defined rhythm as σχήμα (from έχω), **way of holding together, structure**⁶ (Agamben, 1999, p. 127, note 3). In Giorgio Agamben's (1999, pp. 97-99) reading of Aristotle, he 'identifies [...] the original principle of presence precisely with ρυθμός (rhythm)' and, additionally, argues that this principle of presence 'opens and maintains the work of art in its original space.' This 'ekstasis in a more original dimension' is achieved by a kind of stop in time (=ek-stasis) of the ροή, i.e., the flow of time.⁷ Rhythm is 'the power that grants the work of art its original space.' The word "rhythm" comes from the Greek ρέω, which means to flow, as in the case of water.⁸ 'That which flows does so in a temporal dimension: it flows in time' (Agamben, 1999, p. 99). Time and space, as shown throughout art history,⁹ are intrinsic elements of the visual language.¹⁰

'Every work of art is one rhythm.'
–Hölderlin¹¹

⁶ Cf. the signatures doctrine in the theoretical context section.

⁷ See above the Liddell-Scott definition of ροή=rhythm.

⁸ See the artwork *Sea*.

⁹ Cf. the chapter about Morandi.

¹⁰ That is, essentially and etymologically, the metaphor – i.e., the transposition, as Hiller comments.

¹¹ As quoted in Von Arnim (1840).

3. CREATIVE PRACTICE

3.1. Creative practice 2009-2010

During the academic year 2009-2010 I have been exploring the transitions between the actual perceptible space and the created visual space of the artifact by using painting, sculptural and architectural means. With the osmosis and synthesis of the two notions I aim to re-examine the constitution of the notion of the *real*, the process of *re-presentation* and the interrelated spatiotemporal dynamics of *presence*. I investigate the multiplicity of the different aspects of space and the implications of time, and I undertake a process of negotiation, transformation and re-composition of all of these stimuli into artwork where the figural and the abstract coexist. The outcome, which may seem to be characterized by the notion of fragmentation, displacement and simultaneity, is a pursuit to co-ordinate the spatiotemporal dynamics of space and re-achieve the unity and the inner rhythm of my perception of space through plastic means.

Early in the year, I was mainly working on the subject matter of the human figure and its surrounding space, that I considered and manipulated as inseparable and always in flux. I was working directly from observation of the perceptible world and I was moving my position of observation in relation to the subject as a sculptor does. This multidimensional lived experience is affected by two interrelated and inseparable factors: (a) the object (i.e., the place, “the fact” in Deleuze’s terms) and (b) the subject (nervous system, vital movement, “instinct”, temperament) (Deleuze, 2008, p. 25).

The manipulation of diverse means and techniques (i.e., painting, carving, sculptural applications, sculptural use of colour) corresponds to the transition from the actual space to the space of the artifact, as the lived multidimensional experience is not only visual but haptic as well.



Figure 22
Untitled, 2010, oil on wood, 35 x 35cm

Soon, my research, the reflection on my aims and the feedback from supervisory tutorials, led me to include in the method of my creative strategy the use of photography.

During a first stage of working from observation in order to gain an intimate experience of my subject-matter and begin composing the work, I started collecting photographic documentation of my subject from different points of view and at different times of the day, capturing the changes of light.

In a second phase, I would work by using the collected photographic archive that contained fragmented aspects of my subject, initiating an abstract process of experimentation and changes informed by the photographical fragments and the fragmented attributes of my memory from the first phase. I would



Figure 23
Detail: *Untitled*, 2010, oil on wood

compose, reflect on the outcome and recompose in a manner that hovers between figuration and abstraction.

Finally, when the composition of these fragments would start to acquire an overall unity and rhythm, the work would develop in a more decisive direction, always preserving a condition where the figural and the abstract coexist (see *Figures 22, 23*).

With the inclusion of photography in my creative process I tried to reassess my process through the different possibilities afforded by this medium.

Baudrillard (1998, pp. 236-237) describes this

difference as follows: 'Rather than having the presence and representation of the subject foisted upon the object, [...] the object becomes the site of the absence and disappearance of the subject. [...] Photography conveys the state of the world in our absence.' This dialogue is about the reality principle itself.

The addition of photography in my method changes the function of the lived experience presented above to a degree, as now the photography allows only a visually static experience of an absent object. The wide range of sensations that form the experience and affect the development of my work have to be retrieved through the activation of the memory. The potential to capture the changes by photographing multiple aspects of the subject in many different times, and the activation of memory that transforms and blurs the apprehension of reality added new dimensions to the figural and the abstract elements that coexist in my artwork.

The adaption of the technical medium of the camera in my creative process and the reflection on its potentials during my creative experimentation led to an expansion of my subject matter to the space of the urban landscape. This evolution of my research was accompanied by the insertion of the medium of video documentation in my methodology. This tool allowed me to explore the spatiotemporal dynamics of presence more deeply, as it offered me the chance to collect and reflect on material that records not only different aspects of space and different moments in time but also more attributes related to space and time; attributes such as the movement, the speed, the extent of diversities and similarities/repetitions and the inherent rhythm of the recorded landscape.

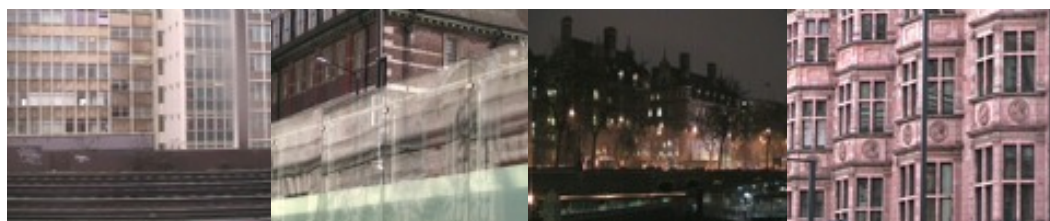


Figure 24
Stills from video clips from the archive that informed the composition of the *Polyptych III-London*

In the first phase I recorded day and night aspects of the city both from fixed points and in motion, from the inside of the train (see *Figure 24*). I elaborated my material using the Adobe Premier

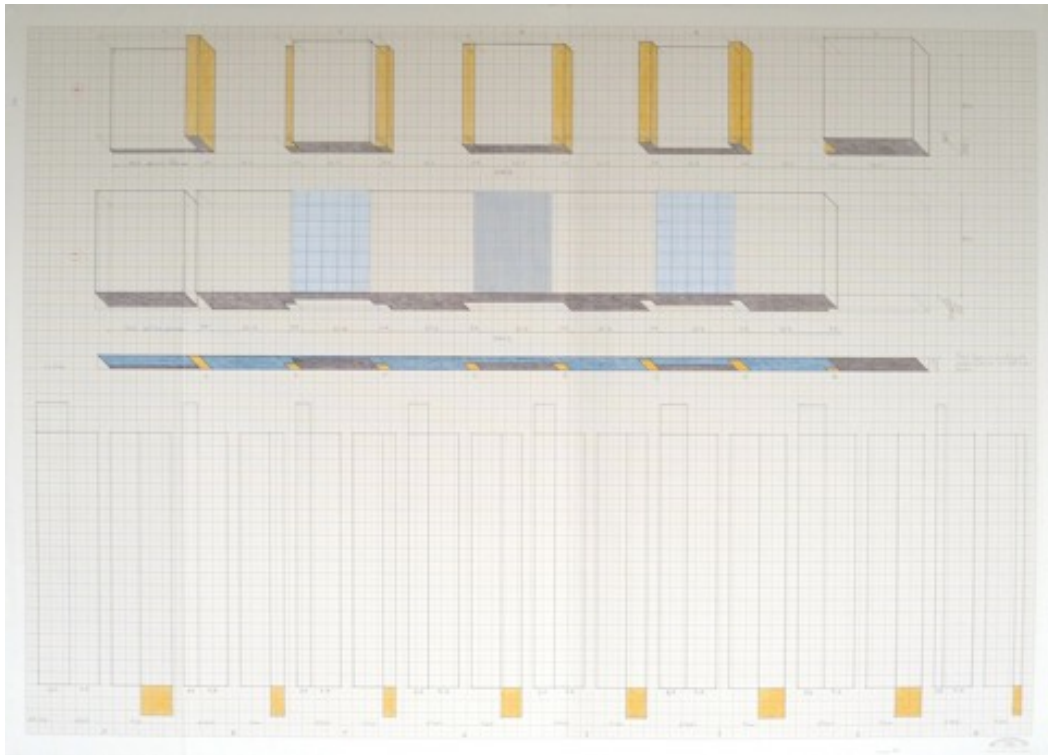


Figure 25
Preparatory drawing for the Polyptych London

computer programme, choosing the clips and extracting video stills that interested me. This process allowed me to reflect on both the spatial attributes of the recorded spaces (forms, patterns, materials, repetitions and diversities, scales, light, etc.) and the attributes of the medium itself (the structure of the digital image from pixels, the blurring when recording in motion, etc.). This process was accompanied by a realization of preparatory compositional drawings, where I reflected on and manipulated my choices from the fragments of data, studying, measuring and re-composing the spatial relationships of the pictorial and sculptural elements (see *Figure 25*).

A priority in my process was the discovery of ways in which the broad subject matter of London's urban space could be reduced in the small scale of the artwork and ways in which the artwork could acquire a tension that would imply its expansion to such a wide scale. This experimentation led me to several decisions, the main ones being the adaption of the form of the polyptych (see *Figures 26, 27, Appendix: Images 22, 23*) and the preoccupation with the correlation of the work to the actual architectural space in which it would be positioned (see *Figure 26, Appendix: Images 25, 26, 28*).

The choice of the polyptych as a compositional arrangement (a) relativizes the beginning and the end of the artwork's limits, (b) follows existing patterns of the urban landscape, (c) allows the constitutive parts of the work to integrate with the space where the work is positioned as they function as parts in a wider structure, (d) relativizes the perception of the whole and the part of the composition, and (e) promotes the rhythmical element of the outcome.

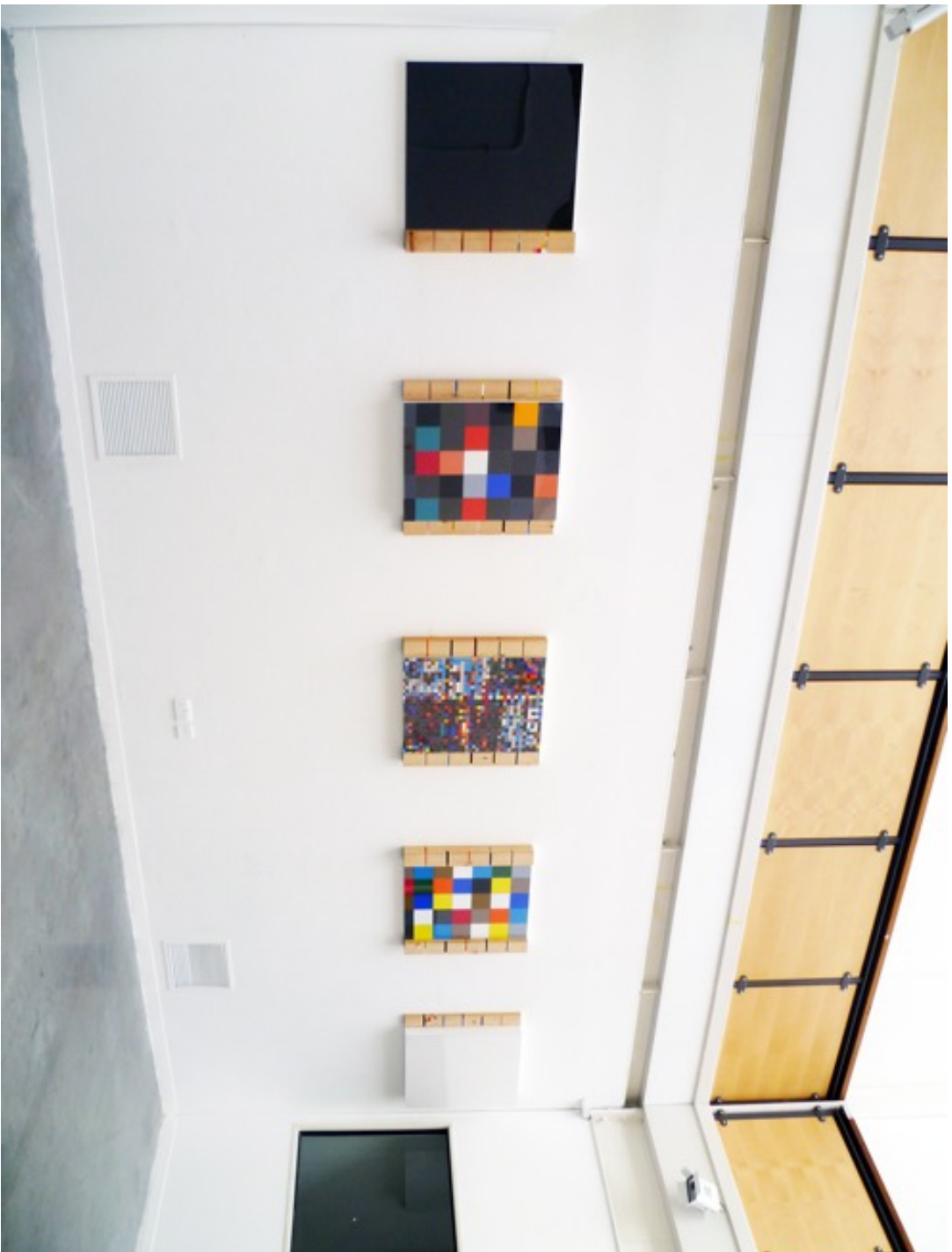


Figure 26
Polypych III, 2010, acrylic gouache, wood, perspex, carving on wood, 5 pieces: 80 x 80 x 10, 5 cm (width x height x max. depth)

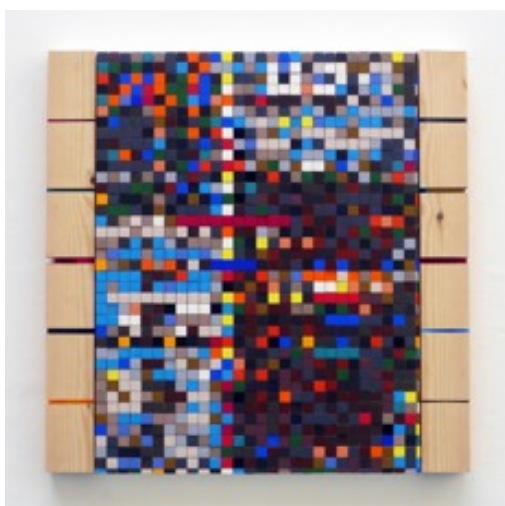


Figure 27
Polyptych III, acrylic gouache, wood, perspex, carving
on wood, 80 x 80 x 10.5 cm (width x height x depth)

3.2. Creative practice 2010-2011

In the previous year's research I inaugurated an exploration of the notion of *rhythm* as a mode of analysis both in theory and practice. Further explorations concerning rhythm marked it out as a central methodological tool for my inquiry on *Presence and Representation*.

In the academic year 2010-2011 I experimented with applying a rhythmical manipulation in my creative process through the use of different techniques. I initially elaborated a still-in-progress work that includes the projection of 25 painted frames (see *Figures 28, 29*) on a marble's surface (see Appendix: *Image 30*). Metaphorically, the marble's surface will welcome the projected image in a way similar to that of a shore that welcomes the sea. In this way, I aim to study the presence of the immaterial projected light and its meeting with the hard edged marble. Furthermore, carving on marble makes the rhythm that the piece of marble imposes by its own character more apparent. By means of the sound of the rhythmical carving and the rhythm of the carved marks and pauses, I make an attempt to connect the making process with the outcome of the artwork.

In this creative process, three different considerations of space and time are interwoven:

- space and time as inherent components of the creative process,
- the space and time of the 25 frames per second of my video camera,
- the “timeless” recurrence of the sea's waves.

My reflection on the feedback that I have received from the work in progress seminars helped me clarify my method of rhythmical analysis by better defining the *quantitative* rhythmical aspects and elements of my work, as the *qualitative* ones were already more apparent. This progress led to the work entitled *Polyptych IV*.

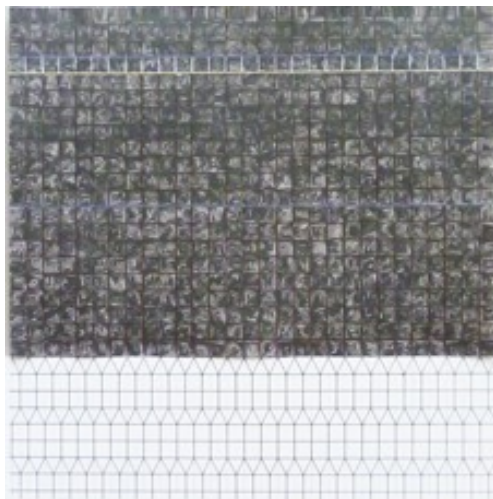


Figure 28
Frame no. 5/25,
acrylic paint, pencil, rapidograph,
40 x 40 cm

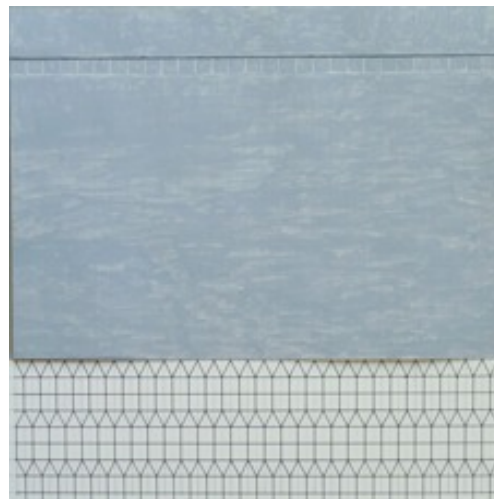


Figure 29
Frame no. 10/25,
acrylic paint, pencil, rapidograph,
40 x 40 cm



Figure 30
One wave loop, video stills for the Polyptych IV

Henri Lefebvre in his *Rhythmanalysis* (p. xii) describes the rhythm analyst as ‘capable of listening to a house, a street, a town as one listens to a symphony, an opera.’ This kind of rhythmical analysis involves two successive movements simultaneously: a **qualitative** one, ‘as one listens to a symphony’, and a **quantitative** one, as ‘rhythm always implies a **measure**’ (p. 8), and vice-versa. This reciprocal action is inherent to rhythm. ‘Rhythm reunites quantitative aspects and elements, which mark time and distinguish moments in it, and qualitative aspects and elements, which link them together, found the unities and result from them. Rhythm appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body’ (p. 9).

The subject matter of my work entitled *Polyptych IV* is the flow, the rhythm of the sea’s waves. It is a representation of the sea that results from a rhythmical analysis of its presence. Each curve’s length in all five different units of the work is 31,4 cm (see *Figure 31*). The initial step in my process was to videotape the sea and then extract characteristic video stills representing the “loop” of the movement of a single wave (see *Figure 30*). In science and mathematics, the wave has been described as a disturbance that travels through space and time, usually accompanied by a transfer of energy. ‘An energy is employed, unfolds in a time and a space (a space-time). Isn’t all expenditure of energy accomplished in accordance with a rhythm?’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 65). With these ideas in mind, in *Polyptych IV* I tried to make apparent the congruousness of my method and practice/artwork, as it will become clear later.

The use of a camera and the observation of the video stills in the computer, in order to make an analysis based on rhythm, raise questions concerning the immediacy of the medium. The theoretical problematization on whether ‘technologies kill immediacy’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 53) is a continuation of my previous exploration of the mediation of photography and video in the creative process. In a mode similar to the Derridean notion of *differance* (the aspect of non-presence), Lefebvre describes (2004, p. 47) this mediation as ‘present without presence.’ His distinction between presence and the present has greatly influenced my exploration of the constitution of *the real* and the interrelated notions of *presence* and *representation*.

In *Polyptych IV*, I investigate, through the initial observation and the following video recordings and rhythmical analysis, the process of representation and the interrelated presence (represent). This investigation led to the creation of a relief polyptych that is structured through the combination of **modules**¹ (see *Figure 31*, Appendix: *Images 31-35*). I realized this work in an interdisciplinary manner, combining the creative strategies of painting, sculpture, architecture. Relief ‘brings about the most rigid link between the eye and the hand because its element is the flat surface, which allows the eye to function like the sense of touch; furthermore, it confers, and indeed imposes, upon the eye a tactile, or rather haptic, function; it thereby ensures the joining together of the two senses of touch and sight, *like the soil and the horizon*’ (Deleuze, 2008, p. 85).

The rhythmical analysis for the work *Polyptych IV* integrated the sense of hearing (in the way of the rhythmical arrangement of the units, and also in the way that, according to Johannes Itten (1974, p.

¹ *modus*: in 16th century Latin, it means “measure” (denoting an architectural unit of length).

module: each of a set of standardized parts or independent units that can be used to construct a more complex structure.

modulus: employing or involving a module or modules as the basis of design or construction (*Oxford Latin mini dictionary*, 2008).



Figure 31
Polyptych IV, 2011, plaster, paper, digital colour print,
20 x 20 x <10 cm

18), the red to violet analogy of electromagnetic vibration in the spectrum is equal to an octave, and the element of water. In *Polyptych IV* I am directly referencing Bachelard's consideration (1987) of the *basic elements*, i.e., the primal elements of the world, that is fire, air, water and earth, in relation to rhythmanalysis.

The planning of the five different curves resulted from a reduction to the essential movements of the sea waves. All of the five different wavy curves have the same length, 31,4 cm, but each has a different wave amplitude: 10 cm, 8 cm, 6 cm, 4 cm and 2 cm. In addition, each of the five curves/units of the work corresponds to a different wavelength, velocity and frequency. Each of these five modules is reproduced several times, but the copies, that are identical in shape, differ in colour. The *in situ* modulation of the units in the exhibition space contributes to the overall **open** form of the work, thanks to the different compositional possibilities that are available. The possible combinations of the units may be subjected again to mathematical and proportional calculations, and each time they constitute a different rhythmical progress. This strategy raises questions on the basis of decision making during the last stage of the creative process – i.e., to choose among a set of characteristics that are already at hand, such as tone, colour or light.

The overall shape of each of the five curvy clay molds, i.e., the negative from which we produce the copies we need, almost coincide with the so-called “positive”, which is a “film” made of paper that constitutes a unit, a module. This identification, as well as this technique, results from the fact that on this double-sided curved film of paper, on this unit, the negative and the positive coexist (see Appendix: *Images 32-35*). Each unit of the five shapes can be used in four different possible ways, and each unit can occupy a different part in the composition. The composition and the number of the units that are to be used are subjected to consideration in relation to the architectural space of the presentation of the piece. In this way, the form of the *Polyptych IV* remains *open*.

As far as colour is concerned, I am experimenting with digital colouring methods. I have been exploring the structure and colour characteristics of the digital image of video stills, as well as the characteristics and limitations of this digital image's processing by means of a computer and a printer. By zooming into the different spots of the images until the pixels are revealed and printing them, I get both the digital colour and structure imprinted on paper (see Appendix: *Image 32*). I then cut those prints in pixel-like squares of 5 cm, 4.5 cm, 4 cm, 3.5 cm and 3 cm, and glue them on the surface of the work's modules. This process of a repetitive hand-made elaboration of the piece, that occurs from the gluing of the pixels on the surface of the curves/units, renders both the units and the overall work *sui generis* phenomenologically, in contradiction to the technologically fabricated reproduction of the coloured pixels.

Finally, it can be said that the pre-decided measurements and shapes of the curves of the units, which precede their actual construction, the use of the digital colour, the repetitive gluing of pixels on the modules, the openness regarding the possible compositions of the work are all characteristics that could allow the making of the work by anyone following instructions. Of course, different people would add their own qualitative aspect of rhythm to the overall outcome. This “instructional/directional” manner that guides the process of construction of a work which could be made by anyone that would follow the instructions poses the question of authority and its limitations.



Figure 32
Polyptych II, 2010, paper, acrylic adhesive, computer colour prints, 200 x 70 cm

3.3. Creative practice 2011-2012

The polyptych formation applied as a compositional tool to my previous works has also been applied to the works *Horizons I* and *Horizons II*, but in the form of small units contained in a carpet's texture. The carpet is used as a ground for painting, offering in advance this needed grid formation that I used for my *Polyptychs* in order to practically explore and relativize the limits between the artwork's space and the surrounding space – a problem intrinsic to art practice.

The stimulus for the synthesis was a landscape; I abstractly painted this landscape, giving emphasis to the horizontal limitations of its planes, which I considered as horizons. A horizon is not only the non existing existing place where sky and earth meet but also an intellectual and perceptual horizon. This is strongly confirmed by the traditional conception of 'the horizontal direction [that] can be seen as representation of the human condition and the vertical direction as a representation of what transcends the particular situation' (Guénon, 2001, p. 100). Colour attributes demonstrate a limitless limitation of such a kind (as horizon does), and the same goes for the artistic efforts to estimate the space–time analogies of the composition and the size and proportions of the lines.

Two panels of the same size were placed to the right and to the left of the painted carpet of *Horizons I*, as well as above and below the painted carpet of *Horizons II* (see *Figures 33, 34*). These panels were painted with car paint in order to mirror and reflect the light. The reflective quality of the peripheral panels was in contrast to the texture of the central panel. The application of this effect corresponds to the day–night poles of the Sun's movement – the edges of the painter's palette. Representing these extreme poles, they manifest characteristics of a different order (symbolical, reflective and participatory) than that of the middle painting, which was "woven" and generated between these unlimited limitations of the two poles. The reflective attribute of the polar panels refutes color itself, as the black panel reflects more light than it would normally do, while, at the same time, the white panel demonstrates an unusual impenetrableness. Additionally, the reflection effect promotes an indefinability in space–time definition, whereas the texture of the intermediate painting, nailed as it is on the wall, offers as a contrast to this indefinability a definite materiality and space–time orientation.

In my works *Horizons I* and *II* I elaborated the grid formation that I firstly adopted for the *Polyptych III* (see Appendix: *Images 26, 27*), which in the specific works operates also as the nexus between black and white and the calculable digits of the synthesis. This compositional arrangement is connected with my *Polyptychs*' quest *inter alia* on artistic control, measurement, proportional estimations, the whole and the part, the zooming-in of microcosmos and the zooming-out of macrocosmos, repetition and seriality. Additionally, the neutral scheme of the grid historically points to a big part of the modernist strategy to which I refer and to contemporary uses of this formation.

The works *7 Bells*, *Pebbles* and *7 Vessels* are a study on the basics of visual language; its space–time range and correspondences. *7 Bells* and *7 Vessels* are equivalent to the seven-note scale and the seven colours of the visible spectrum. The two works reflect my interest in the acoustic attributes of visual language, the transposition, metaphor and permutation of different disciplines, orders and states. The analogy of the volume quantity to the volume quality (the timbre), quality and quantity in permutation, is a key tool of my art research methodology (cf. the Artists and theorists section and the rhythm concept, see Appendix: *Images 19, 21*). *7 Bells* and *7 Vessels* are designed to be

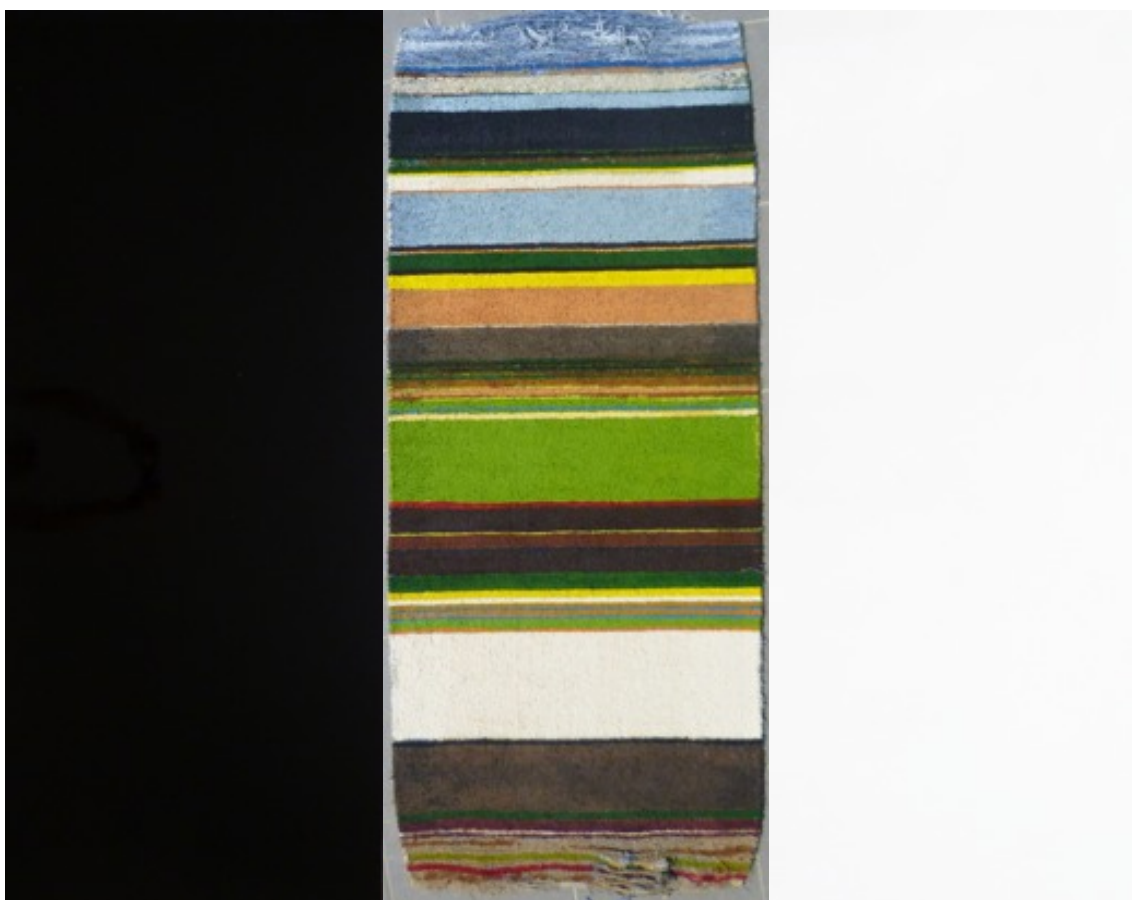


Figure 33
Horizons I, 2011, wood, carpet, acrylic paint, varnish, 160 cm x 68 cm x 3



Figure 34
Horizons II, 2011, acrylic paint, iron, car paint, carpet, 150 cm x 91 cm x 3



Figure 35
7 bells, 2011, iron, the bigger bell approximately: 18 x 17 x 7 cm



Figure 36
7 Vessels, 2011, glass vessels, water, acrylic paint, 12cm each vessel

presented in different spaces, engaging each time with different spatiotemporal conditions (see Appendix: Image 38).

Pebbles is an ongoing project, in which I study the formation of a visual text (see Figure 37) (cf. my related research in the theoretical context section). Language is commonly conceived as letters brought together to form words, to form sentences, to form a text (text-ure, text-ile, con-text). In a scene of the 2008 movie *Departures* (director: Yojiro Tacita, writer: Kundo Koyama), the young hero and his father exchange a pebble as a gift. The chosen pebble should be able to reflect and describe the son's feelings for his father, and vice versa. The task was to find the **proper** kind of pebble in terms of texture, volume, colour, scheme; to find a vehicle for expressing particular feelings; to find the proper representatives, i.e., the proper signifiers.



Figure 37
Pebbles, 2011, pebbles,
A4 pebble-text arrangement

Accordingly, a collection of pebbles can be endlessly repositioned and recontextualized as units of a **text** acquiring different meanings each time (as in the “roles” of Morandi's bottles). The fluidity of the composition reflects the fluidity of sensation and emotion, the *poñ* [roé] of **rhythm** (cf. the *Polyptych IV sea* project). Additionally, the collected around the Greek coasts pebbles introduce a notion of **topicality**, as different pebbles (shapes, colours, texture) are to be found in analogy to different geological layers. My intention was to study how this physical vocabulary influences art articulation and how art articulation, in turn, is sustained within nature's vast dictionary, so as to establish a direct relationship to reality, together with art's ‘symbolic transposition’ (Gallagher, 2011, p. 27).

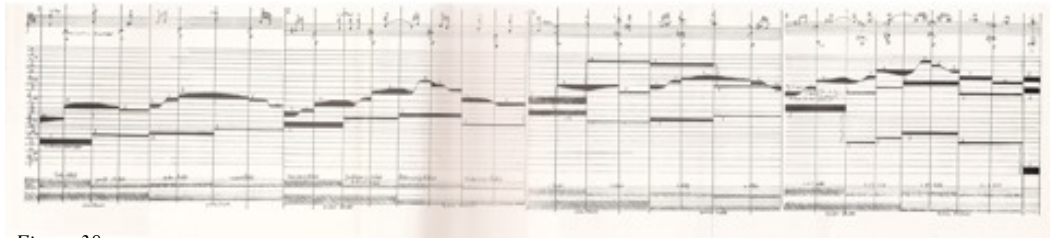


Figure 38
Paul Klee, visual representation of J.S. Bach's musical phrase for three voices

The site-specific installation *Polyptych V-ASKT De Chirico Foyer 2011* has an affinity with what Giorgio Agamben described (1999) as 'the crepuscular light of **presence-absence**' where it is considered 'the most alienated form of *ποίησις*, the form in which privation itself comes into presence' (see Figure 39). This work deals with such a state of presence-absence and reintroduces questions of authority. The aim of this work is to influence the given architectural conditions with an image of these conditions, to interweave the actual space-time with the imagery of the photographic image.

The common strategical gesture of my creative practice, to measure the architectural analogies and proportions, has also been mobilized for this piece. I then took numerous photographs of the existing corridor/passage of the space, readjusting composition, angle of view, aperture, aspect ratio, depth of field, depth of focus, diaphragm, resolution, exposure, film speed, saturation, time exposure... (see Figure 40). On the one hand there was the time, space and light produced from the photographic apparatus and on the other hand the same properties of the preexisting space and time,



Figure 39
ASKT De Chirico Foyer 2011, 2011, the installation space

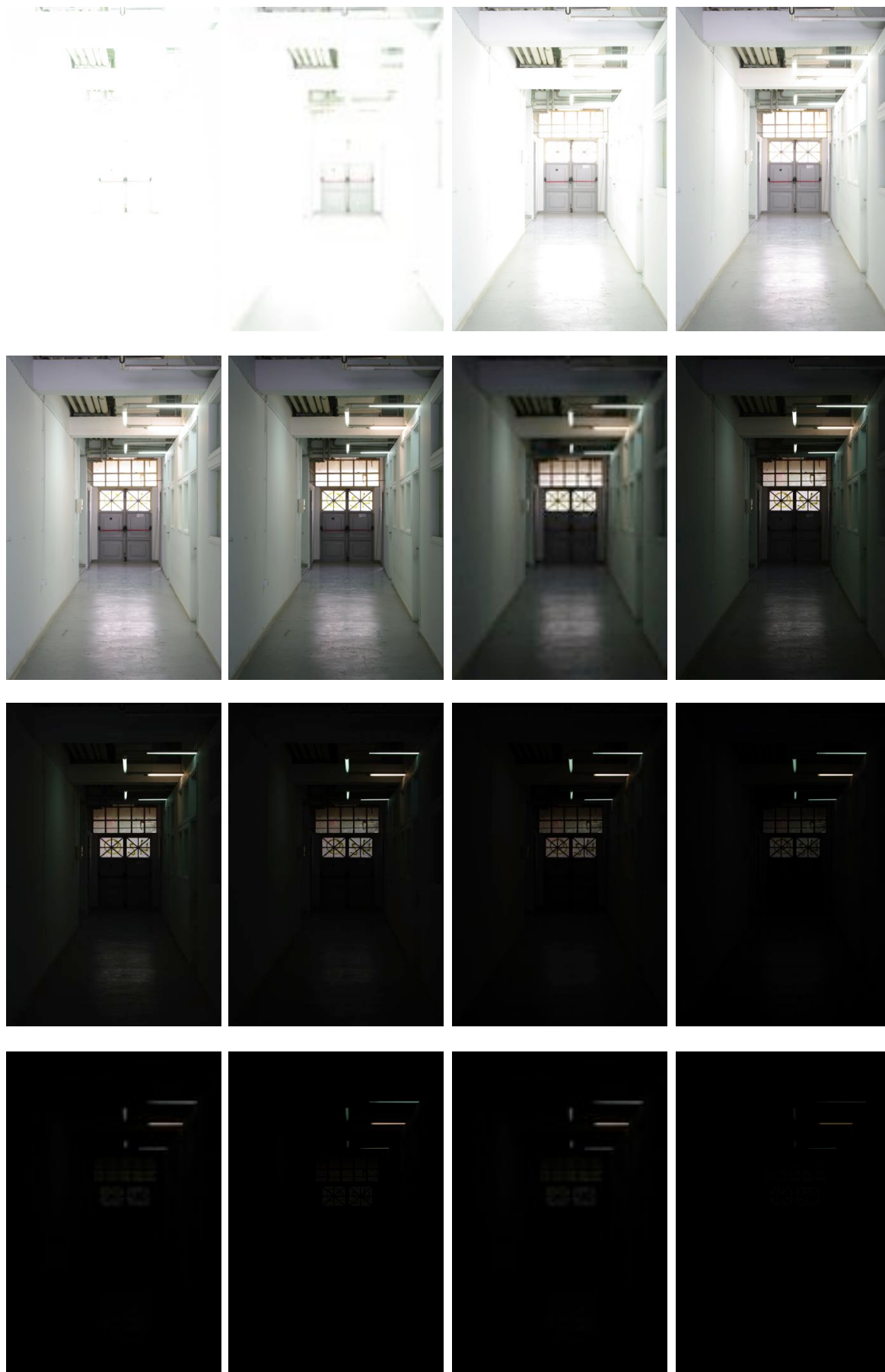


Figure 40
Polyptych V, ASKT De Chirico Foyer 2011, photographs for the installation

where the windows of the room resemble the diaphragm of the camera. I cyclically sutured and introduced the one space–time into the other with the duplication of the corridor with an image of it which had “exactly” the same dimensions (see Appendix: *Images 36, 37*). This stratagem refers to my Giorgio Morandi research and his tactic of repositioning and painting the same bottle in a different part of the composition (on his table), thus having a double of it and studying the space–time attributes per se (see *Figure 14*). I molded the existing space as a sculptor, adding next to the real corridor’s entrance a wooden constructed plane on which I placed the photograph of this corridor. Subsequently, the passage became bigger, its acoustic properties intensified, together with its echo and repercussion properties, as well as the space, time and light conditions (see *Figure 39*). This practice challenges in a way the site specificity – the literality, in linguistic terminology – of the work and reopens the question of the reality principle – i.e., the ontological problem. The sculptural construction was designed as a reminiscent of a **theatrical** scenery, underlying the presence–absence dipole (see Appendix: *Images 36, 37*).

Polyptych VI

The vicissitudes of light are the practical and theoretical vehicle for the development of my work *Polyptych VI* (see *figure 41*). The stimulus for the evolvement of this artwork is the open, fluid and always in change activity of the light that takes effect in specific spaces, which are both internal and external landscapes. With this ongoing project I aim to approximate and express the instant when the poetic process resonates with the pace of light, thus regaining a real dimension.



Figure 41, Polyptych VI, 2011-2012, oil and curving on wood, 9 pieces 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)

In *Polyptych VI*, I sustained the relief character and the compositional arrangement of the polyptych that I used in previous pieces, as it stands between painting and sculpture and serves to address the relation of art with the reality principle.

This work comes as the continuation of previous explorations on site specificity – the pictorial and the actual site, and their in-between limits. It brings into the discussion the pictorial/visual/imagery/illusional two-dimensional space of the surface (dependent and subjective like a mirror eidolon), together with the tactile/sculptural/factual/material three-dimensional space (independent and objective like a rock).

For the elaboration of this work I used strong impasto along with carving in order to respond to the fluidity prompted by the subject matter. This concurrence of the outcome with its creative process suggests the identification of the presence with its representation.

Practically, the artifact absorbs and is absorbed by the surrounding space, and the “represented” is also my participation in the landscape that is to be represented, i.e., the artwork. The surrounding space reflects its atmosphere on the painted surface and, conversely, the artwork reflects its atmosphere on the surrounding space. For this reason, this work is to be presented within light conditions that possess such a fluctuation and openness.

In comparison to my older work, *Polyptych VI*, it demonstrates a reduction of the distance between the “landscape” that is to be represented and the “landscape” of the painting. This practice often results in the disappearance and destruction of an obvious identification of a specific representation. It is only light that differs!



Figure 42, *Polyptych VI*, 2011-2012, oil and carving on wood, one of the 9 pieces of dimensions 40 x 40 x 1 cm

4. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Solo exhibitions

2003, Chrysothemis Gallery, Athens, painting.
(twelve oil paintings on canvas)

Joint exhibitions

2011, ASKT, Athens, installation at the De Chirico Foyer.
2010, UEL, *PD showcase*, London, installation.
2009, Wimbledon College of Art, *MA degree show*, London, installation.
(oil paint, carving and cuttings on three mdf panels and three white primed mdf panels)
2009, The Nunnery, *Intersections*, London, painting.
(one oil painting on canvas and wood)
2003, Chrysothemis Gallery, Athens, painting.
(two oil paintings on canvas)
2000, Miranda Gallery, Hydra (Greece), painting.
(six oil paintings on canvas)

Commissions

2004, *12 portraits of the University's former Deans*, Dimokritio University of Thrace, Greece.

Publications concerning my artwork

2003, *To Vima* (Greek newspaper), article by A. Zenakos.
2003, *To Ethnos* (Greek newspaper).
2003, *Avriani* (Greek newspaper).

Awards

2007, Academy of Athens, four-year scholarship for postgraduate studies abroad.
1998-2005, State Scholarships Foundation, Greece, shortlisted for the honorary scholarship
for high-score students in painting and sculpture.

Teaching experience

2011, V. Nikolakakou preparation centers for the Architectural Faculties, Athens,
Drawing Teacher, part-time employment.
2007-2008, Arsakio-Tositsio highschool, Athens, Art Teacher, full-time employment.
2007-2008, V. Nikolakakou preparation centers for the Architectural Faculties,
Drawing Teacher, part-time employment.
2006, Athens Concert Hall, children educational workshop on Constantin Brancusi,
a collaboration of the Athens Concert Hall (Megaron Plus) with the Centre Georges
Pompidou, member of the teaching team that run the programme, part-time employment.
2006-2007, Kalos Samaritis, house for old people, Athens, organizer of the workshop
for creative occupation, part-time employment.
2003, 2nd Department of Primary Education, 7th and 9th Primary Schools, Athens,
Art Teacher, part-time employment.

5. CONCLUSION

In my practice, I have researched the creative process by introducing the compositional arrangement of the polyptych to a series of projects. This compositional formation is, for me, a medium to explore the nexus between the actual space and the pictorial space, and also to negotiate their limitations.

I have enquired into the relationship between the poetic¹ space–time and the real-lived space–time, their interweaving, the literality of the poetic gesture, the gesture of making (=act= $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\zeta\iota\varsigma$) – an enquiry that may be consequently characterized as an ontological pursuit.

In this context, subjective understanding of signification promotes the idea that reality is purely subjective and is constructed through our use of signs, whereas objective analysis conceives a single objective reality which exists indisputably outside of us.

The poetic consideration synthesizes the two comprehensions, not only through mere analysis, but by ways of a transposition from the rational to the transcendental; it finds and founts analogies between sensations and actions.

In the process of the poetic manifestation – or, more specifically, representation – I have examined the important issue of visual, or pictorial,² language – the intermediate of the expression. For me, the manipulation of the pictorial language is not only a matter of shape/form, but primarily a matter of content/substance.³

An essential attribute of this pictorial ($\pi\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$) language is rhythm, which is present before, during and after the elaboration of a project. My hypothesis is that rhythm as consonance comprises the artwork's fundamental tool which allows it to communicate, as it regulates (rhythm- $\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota$) the consonance of the inside to outside, and vice versa.



¹ I use the word in its original meaning as $\pi\acute{o}\iota\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$: a making, fabrication, creation, production, $\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\zeta\iota\varsigma$ (action), Hdt., attic (H.-G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An intermediate Greek-English*, at www.perseus.tufts.edu).

² Pictorial and visual stands here for the untranslatable Greek word $\pi\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$, from $\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$: put in a certain form, mould, form by education, training, form an image of a thing in the mind, imagine, metaph., fabricate, forge (H.-G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An intermediate Greek-English*, at www.perseus.tufts.edu).

³ Cf. Elytis, 1993, p. 41.

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APPENDIX

A) THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Gilles Deleuze once wrote that a philosophical inquiry entails at least two elements: the identification of the problem and the choice of concepts that are adequate for approaching it.

–Giorgio Agamben,
The signature of all things, p. 76

1. Aporia on artistic methodology

In fine art practice-based areas of study, methodologies are less well established than in other areas of study – or, in other words, fine art practice repulses a well established methodology, thus maintaining an *entropy*, or an *openness*.

Historically, a shortcoming of this kind triggered Goethe's suggestion for founding a theory of painting, a proposal which corresponds to the tendency for objectification of the subjective character of art practice and theory of his times. Analogous pursuits were undertaken in 1920s by the avant-garde artists Paul Klee, Johannes Itten and Wassily Kandinsky.

Such an endeavor falls within the area of an epistemological pursuit. As far as the sciences are concerned, it is a question of the foundation of each *episteme*, i.e., 'the investigation of the practical and theoretical methodology which forms the base upon which an epistemological object is formed and rendered functional. Thus, the objective of the epistemology, in general, is the reflection on the different epistemological objects and their foundations' (Roussopoulos, 2011, p. 36).

These issues have to be met in fine art practice, if one wants to encounter the problem of evaluation of the artistic project and declare the criteria of his estimation – the success or failure of the assessed project.

Furthermore, this interest is consistent with an aspiration 'to position the study of all types of cultural production (such as literature or the fine arts) on a more solidly scientific basis of method and insight, rather than have criticism remain dependent on the various more-or-less subjective approaches' (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 22).

The present research's (*Presence and Representation*) discussion uses critical concepts and terms coming from the matrix of themes of Critical Theory. The elaboration and definition of these concepts assist the evaluation and critique of the practical and experimental work, and vice versa. Critical Theory's focus on language, symbolism and communication is consistent with the act of representation as a consequence of a presence (re-presentation). In this context, *representation* constitutes both an element of the apparatus of *cognition* and a practical/material manifestation.

Generally speaking, different historical conceptions of the act/process of representation correspond to different methodological approaches to it, and the other way around. Accordingly, different necessities are reflected within the process of representation and, in my view, they can be illuminated by the exploration of the different approaches – usually concordant or polemic/opponent – to the main theoretical field, the *cantus firmus*, of Metaphysics.

2. The traditional concept of representation

All the arts, without exception, are “imitative”: the work of art can only be judged as such [...] by the degree to which the model has been correctly represented; the beauty of the work is proportionate to its accuracy (*ὁρθότης* = “*integritas sive perfectio*”), or truth (*ἀλήθεια* = *veritas*). In other words, the artist’s judgement of his own work by the criterion of art is a criticism based upon the proportion of essential to actual form, paradigm to image. [...] The “imitation” (*μίμησις*) or “**representation**” of a model (even a “presented” model) involves, indeed, a “likeness” (*ὁμοία*, *similitudo*, Skr. *sādrśya*), but hardly what we usually mean by “verisimilitude” (*ὁμοιώτης*). What is traditionally meant by “likeness” is not a copy but an “image” akin (*συγγενής*) and “equal” (*ἴσος*) to its model, in other words a natural and ad-equate symbol of its referent. (Coomaraswamy, 1981, p. 16).

The origin of the idea of “representation” and “likeness” can be traced back to before the discovery of writing (see Flusser, 2001, p. 23), i.e., before history, to the unconscious, perpetual magical circles of prehistoric thinking – to the figurative, visual, imaginative epoch and its ways. An example of the way of knowing by “likeness” can be found in the Empedoclean verses,

*We see earth by earth, water by water
Bright aether by aether, and obliterating fire by fire
Love by love, and strife by baneful strife.*

(Empedocles, fragment 109, in Aristotle’s *De anima*, 404b12-15)

Aristotle in mentioning the Empedoclean verses elaborates the idea that perception and knowledge require a likeness of composition between the subject and the object of cognition.

Furthermore, it has been discussed by scholars that the mythological prototype of representational artistic practice is Narcissus (Danto, 2004, p. 32). Initially, in the narration of the myth, Narcissus didn’t know that the object of his love was his self (cf. Lacan’s mirror stage). In truth, what he fell in love with was his reflected image on the mirror-like transparent waters of a fountain, a natural mirror...

3. Semiotics and representation

The matrix of semiotical analysis and structure is often used when trying to understand the formations and functions of cultural representation (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 22). As Arthur Asa Berger (1991, p. 5) explains, ‘the essential breakthrough of semiology is to take linguistics as a model and apply linguistic concepts to other phenomena – *texts*¹ – and not just language itself.’

In semiotics, a sign can be a word, a sound, or a visual image, and researchers operating in this field aim to ‘generate a verifiable understanding of the processes of aesthetic production and reception,’ promising ‘to anchor the “meaning” of the work of art’ according to ‘the operations of the conventions of language’ (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 22). Subsequently, semiology offers a methodology operating in the field of artistic research. An important issue in this context is to examine ‘the methodological conviction of certain models of analysis [that] has been just as overdetermined as that of all the other methodological models that have temporarily governed the interpretation and the writing of art history at different points in the twentieth century’ (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 22).

¹ Structural criticism established the term *text* as any object that can be “read”, whether this object is a work of literature, a street sign, an arrangement of buildings on a city block, or styles of clothing.

Given that semiotics involves ‘studying *representations* and the processes involved in representational practices’, and that ‘to semioticians, “*reality*” always involves representation’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3), its definition can be compared with and conceived as a paraphrase of the traditionalistic description of *mimesis*, that has been presented in the previous chapter. Additionally, Charles Sanders Pierce suggested that reality can only be known via signs. ‘If representations are our only access to reality, determining their accuracy is a critical issue’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

Assessing and posing questions about the representational accuracy and its necessity constitutes part of my research’s theoretical and practical interests,² whilst being, at the same time, an element of its subject matter. The specification of this project’s area of study and methodology also corresponds to Saussure’s estimation that **‘In most scientific disciplines the “objects of study” were “given in advance” and existed independently of the observer’s “point of view”’. [...]** **In linguistics, by contrast, “it is the viewpoint adopted which creates the object”’** (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). Art practice and theory, unavoidably, calls for an adoption of such a viewpoint/thesis.³

Of theoretical and practical interest is also Daniel Chandler’s statements concerning the representational accuracy theme. Specifically, he indicates that ‘Pierce adopted from logic the notion of “**modality**” to refer to the truth value of a sign, acknowledging three kinds: actuality, (logical) necessity and (hypothetical) possibility,’ and that ‘Modality refers to the reality status accorded to or claimed by a sign, text or genre’ (1994, ch. 3).

My overall aspiration to reexamine the constitution of the notion of the *real*, the process of *representation* and the interrelated spatiotemporal dynamics of *presence* is also to be seen within the text of the social semiotic theory of truth, which ‘cannot claim to establish the absolute truth or untruth of representations. It can only show whether a given “proposition” is represented as true or not. From the point of view of social semiotics, truth is a construct of semiosis, and as such the truth of a particular social group, arising from the values and beliefs of that group’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

The consideration of the *reality principle*⁴ is intrinsic to the proposed research on *Presence and Representation*, as **‘any representation is more than merely a reproduction of that which it represents: it also contributes to the construction of reality’** (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). The above notion raises hierarchical questions – i.e., the vast discussion and argumentation about the primacy of the signifier or the signified, or the signature, or the trace – concerning which idea precedes, in what succession and how they are interrelated.⁵

One of the ways in which my inquiry on *Presence and Representation* could possibly contribute to the relevant theoretical and practical fields may be that it tests the preconception, the attitude and the approach towards the work of art before, during and after its production. The importance of this enterprise may be understood if one reflects on the consequences of a possible situation where the distinction of the real and the copy has ceased to be visible. ‘The confusion of the representation

² cf. the modality notion later in the text and the *Polyptych IV* artwork.

³ cf. Heidegger’s elaboration of what is a *thesis*.

⁴ The concept of the *reality principle* comes from Sigmund Freud and his introductory lectures.

⁵ cf. Agamben, 2009, p. 65, for an attempt to link the doctrine of signatures to ontology.

with the thing represented is a feature of schizophrenia and psychosis' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3; Wilden, 1987, p. 201).

In light of the above, it is acknowledged that between the signifier and the signified a flexible modality exists. Yet, even an image is not what it represents – **the presence of an image marks the absence of its referent.**⁶

Historically, only after the seventeenth century 'clear distinctions were being made between representations (signifiers), ideas (signifieds) and things (referents)' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). Pragmatistic or idealistic approaches put an emphasis on the signifier or the signified respectively. Furthermore, "subjective" comprehensions of the sign-function promote the idea that 'reality is purely subjective and is constructed in our use of signs', whereas "objective" comprehensions hold that 'a single objective reality exists indisputably outside us' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

4. Quodlibet⁷ – the theory of signatures

At a certain point, Michel Foucault distinguishes 'semiology – the set of knowledges that allow us to recognize what is a sign and what is not – from hermeneutics, which consists of the set of knowledges that allow us to discover the meaning of signs, to "make the signs speak"' (Agamben, 2009a, p. 58). Enzo Melandri and Foucault revive the Paracelsean episteme⁸ and associate episteme with signatures; 'the type of episteme depends on the type of signature' (Agamben, 2009a, p. 59).

In this context, 'a *signature* is a sort of a sign within the sign; it is the index that in the context of a given semiology univocally makes reference to a given interpretation. A signature adheres to the sign in the sense that it indicates, by means of the sign's making, the code with which it has to be deciphered' (Agamben, 2009a, p. 59).

It is described that 'the semiotic (the sign [semiology]) must be recognized; the semantic (discourse [hermeneutics]) must be understood.' According to Melandri and Foucault, we must 'situate signatures precisely in the "gap"' that separates semiology from hermeneutics. In other words, 'signs do not speak unless signatures make them speak' (Agamben, 2009a, p. 61).

If "'*reality*" always involves representation', an analysis of the signature concept (what afterwards Foucault analyzed as "statement", as **bearer of efficacy**) casts new light to the process of representation, placing a third principle of "cohesion – segregation"⁹ in the dualistic operation of signification (=representation).

Statement/Signature 'is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space' (Agamben,

⁶ This is the dialectics of the *Polyptychs I, II, III* through their serialism and their compositional arrangement as a trace.

⁷ "'Quodlibet ens est unum, verum, bonum": every being presents the signature of unity (which directs it toward mathematics or the theory of singularity), of truth (which orients it toward the theory of knowledge), and of the good (which makes it communicable and desirable)' (Agamben, 2009a, p. 66).

⁸ At the original core of the paracelsian episteme lies the idea that all things bear a sign which manifests and reveals their invisible qualities. '**Nothing is without a sign**' (Agamben, 2009a, p. 33).

⁹ A similar notion can be traced back to the ancient notion of the Empedoclean "Love" (*φιλότης*) and "Strife" (*νεῖκος*).

2009a, p. 63). The scope of examination points to a different methodological approach; ‘to question language [including visual language, as previously stated] **not in the direction to which it refers, but in the dimension that gives it**’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 63). Signatures, in the broad context of cultural representation, ‘mark and “**characterize**”¹⁰ signs at the level of their *existence*¹¹, thus actualizing and displacing their efficacy’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 64).

The existential character of the signature/statement suggestion poses it at a state beyond concept, as ‘being is not a concept but a signature. Hence, *ontology* is not a determinate knowledge but the archaeology of every knowledge, which explores the signatures that pertain to beings by virtue of the very fact of existing, thus predisposing them to the interpretation of specific knowledges’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 66).

A question that can be raised at this point is whether such an approach is to be considered before any formation of an epistemological methodology.

5. Reprise

‘In most scientific disciplines the “objects of study” were “given in advance” and existed independently of the observer’s “point of view”. [...] In linguistics, by contrast, “it is the viewpoint adopted which creates the object.”’

6. Modulatio

Walter Benjamin, when dealing with the subject of *mimesis*, pointed at a transcendental area of understanding the sign: the area of the symbol. Carl Gustav Jung described that a word or an image is symbolic ‘when it implies something *more* than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider “unconscious” aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to **ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason**’ (Jung, 1968, p. 4).

From this perspective, ‘language – as well as writing – appears as a sort of “archive of non-sensuous similarities, of non-sensuous correspondences”, which ground and articulate “the ties not only between what is said and what is meant but also between what is written and what is meant, and equally between the spoken and the written”’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 70).

Similarly, Benjamin’s following fragment posits the *nexus* of meaning of words or sentences:

The mimetic element in language can, like a flame, manifest itself only through a kind of bearer. This bearer is the semiotic element. Thus, *the nexus* of meaning of words or sentences is the bearer through which, like a **flash**, similarity appears. For its production by man – like its perception by him – is in many cases, and particularly the most important, tied to its flashing up. It flits past. (Agamben, 2009a, p. 71)

¹⁰ cf. Flusser for the etymological relation of *character* with the Greek γράφω/χαράσσω.

¹¹ For the contrary cp. the Derridean accusation of *logocentrism* – i.e., the dialectics of *presence* – and the described further down on this report essence, or energy, of *graphein* (=γράφω) as the originary effacement of the proper name.

This description is also of practical interest for the present research, justifying the adoption of the polyptych compositional arrangement and its gap cohesion.

Further on, Benjamin establishes an unavoidable determinant, that of *immaterial similarity*, which ‘functions as an irreducible complement to the semiotic element of language without which the transition to discourse cannot be understood’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 72).

The vicissitudes of *Schein* and the problematic of light in Gerhard Richter’s art practice,¹² as I have described at length in the corresponding section of this report, run in parallel with Benjamin’s description of flash (i.e., image, signature):

“For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time. [...] Every present day is determined by the **images** that are **synchronic** with it: each “now” [*jetzt*] is the now of a **particular recognizability**.¹³ [...] It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, **image** is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill”. (Agamben, 2009a, p. 72).

The above statement, in which Benjamin refers to “a particular recognizability”, is significant for the consideration of the position of the art project (as a historical object) in space–time conditions intrinsic to the process of its production – the formation of a viewpoint: ‘The historical object is never given neutrally; rather, it is always accompanied by an index or signature that constitutes it as image and temporally determines and conditions its legibility’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 73).

Fashion is ‘where signatures exhibit their genuinely historical character’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 72). In fashion’s operation Benjamin’s *synchronic* images are exemplified.¹⁴ In this operation, as a caesura in time,

The signature of Fashion tears the years (the 1920s, the 1960s, the 1980s) out of linear chronology, allowing them to have a special relation with the designer’s gesture, who cites them to make them appear in the incalculable “now” of the **present**. Yet this present is in itself ungraspable, since it lives only in **kairological** (not chronological) relation to the signatures of the past. (Agamben, 2009a, p. 74)

An anadiplosis of this proposition can be found within the term *critical* theory (from *krisis*/κρίσις¹⁵) (the theory on which this report is sustained), that is glossologically connected with the etymology of the words *krisis* (κρίσις), as separation, disaggregation, resolution, distinction, and *kairos*

¹² Gerhard Richter has stated that ‘the central problem in my work is light’ (cf. Hal Foster, 2003, pp. 126-127).

¹³ I also suggest an interpretation of this recognizability in light of Jaques Lacan’s concept of the mirror stage.

¹⁴ cf. Giorgio Agamben’s treatise *What is an apparatus?* on synchronic, as well as Agamben, 1999, p. 72.

¹⁵ κρίσις:

I. a separating, power of distinguishing

II. a decision, judgment, in legal sense, a trial dispute

III. the event or issue of a thing.

(Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English lexicon*, at www.perseus.tufts.edu)

(καῖρός¹⁶), as congruous space and time (from *kera-* notion of proximate unity/articulation, according to Stamatakos Dictionary, p. 484).

This terminology, in turn, calls to mind the signature principle of “cohesion – segregation”, without which, or in its lack of distinction, the ‘worst kind of subversion’ is taking place. ‘It is against this lack of distinction that classical reason armed itself in all its categories. But it is what today again outflanks them, *submerging the principle of truth*’ (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 4).

7.0

An important schema in the contextualization of *Presence and Representation* – or *Representation and Presence*, which makes no difference, according to the following description– links back to the discussion on the primacy/dominance of the Saussurean dipole “signifier – signified”. ‘The non-marked term is not opposed to the marked term as an absence is to presence, but rather that non-**presence** is somehow equivalent to a zero degree of presence (that presence is lacking in its absence)’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 77).

In Giorgio Agamben’s analysis (2009a, p. 78), ‘the zero degree is not a sign, but a signature that, in the absence of a signified, continues to operate as the exigency of an infinite signification that cannot be exhausted by any signified.’ Furthermore, the introduction of an “empty” or “floating” signifier as a product of the primacy of the signifier runs its course in the ontological consideration of zero, or the void – ‘the ontological stopping point of number’ (Badiou, 2008, p. 7).

The doctrine of the empty, void, zero signifier – ‘a sign [that] only means that it means’ (Chandler, 1994, p. 12) – is associated to ‘non-linguistic signs [...such as paintings or sculptures] as being so open to interpretation [hermeneutics], that they constituted a floating chain of signifieds’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3; Barthes, 1957).

In contrast, Heidegger’s approach posits “under erasure” a primacy on a transcendental/preconceived signified, **Being** (thus having the priority), ‘which seems not to tolerate any determinations other than the “neither...nor” of negative theology’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 66). ‘This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible)’ (Derrida, 1997, p. xiv).

‘The sign ~~is~~ that ill-named ~~thing~~... which escapes the instituting question of philosophy...’ (Derrida, 1997, p. 19).

¹⁶ καῖρός:

I. *due measure, proportion, fitness*

II. *of Place, vital part of the body*

III. *more freq. of Time, exact or critical time, season, opportunity*

2. *season*

b. *critical times, periodic states*

3. *generally, time, period*

4. *in pl., οἱ καιροί, the times, i. e. the state of affairs*

IV. *advantage, profit*

V. *Pythag. name for seven, Theol.Ar. 44.*

(Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English lexicon*, at www.perseus.tufts.edu)

8. Jacques Derrida

For Derrida, presence and re-presentation (re-present: identify, resemble, simulate, imitate) belong to the logocentric dialectics/attributes of metaphysics:

But to these metaphysico-theological roots many other hidden sediments cling. The semiological or, more specifically, linguistic “science” cannot therefore hold on to the difference between signifier and signified – the very idea of the sign – without the difference between sensible and intelligible, certainly, but also not without retaining, more profoundly and more implicitly, and by the same token the reference to a signified able to “take place” in its intelligibility, before its “fall”, before any expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible here below. As the face of pure intelligibility refers to an absolute logos to which it is immediately united. (Derrida, 1997, p.13)

Derrida’s description is **open** in more than one ways, since he does not acknowledge any origin in a singular course (hierarchy), but, rather, he speaks of a gesture of a continuous displacement of meaning, in a ‘ceaseless *differance* that erases its own trace in a pure auto-signification’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 79). This non-conceptual “*archi-trace*”, as a “signature at degree zero” (Agamben, 2009a, p. 78), **underlies every concept and every presence**. ‘The trace is then a signature suspended and referred toward itself, a *kenosis* that never knows its own *pleroma*’ (Agamben, 2009a, p. 79).

In pictorial language, as well as in language in general, *differance*¹⁷ acts as a continuous and dynamic re-arrangement of pictorial elements that acquire their character in accordance to/ interaction with all the other elements of the composition¹⁸ (the *con-text*), and constitute and are constituted within a representational system that limits its space.¹⁹

9. () Parenthesis

According to Daniel Chandler, ‘**Modality** refers to the *reality status* accorded to or claimed by a sign, *text*²⁰ or genre’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

With reference to the approach of the modality as a qualitative or quantitative measurement of the “divergence – conversion” from a (“shifting”, in Derrida’s comprehension) reality principle, i.e., a kind of entropy²¹, certain conclusions can be reached about how art practice research resists stable methodological approaches – ‘like a power of resistance that restrains an excessive entropy functions as a self-regulation apparatus providing an uplift of the organizational complexity’ (Arnheim, 1971, p. 13).

¹⁷ *Differance* is a term coined by Jacques Derrida describing how the meaning of signs derives from how they differ from each other – a ‘meaning that is endlessly deferred’ (Chandler, 1994). Also cp. to Heraclitus quote ‘The unlike is joined together, and from differences results the most beautiful harmony’ (Fragment 46, in Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* viii. 2, translated by G.W.T. Patrick).

¹⁸ That description also entails the problem of the limits of the text’s expansion towards history.

¹⁹ When speaking about limitation, I am not referring only to the frame of the canvas (see also Klee’s compositions and Arnheim’s perception of the grapheme).

²⁰ ‘Etymologically, the word *text* means a textile and the word *line* a linen thread. But texts are unfinished textiles; they consist of lines (the woof) and are not held in place by vertical threads (the warp) as a finished textile would be’ (Flusser, 2001, p. 37). See also the artworks *Horizons I, II*.

²¹ The term *entropy* was coined in 1865 by Rudolf Clausius based on the Greek *εντροπία* [entropía]: from *εν-* [en-] (in) and *τροπή* [tropē] (turn, conversion), a *turning toward a state of dis-order* (Greek: *αταξία*).

The word *information*, taken literally, means to give form; and form needs structure. This is why the tempting prospect of applying in-formation theory to the arts, and thereby reducing aesthetic form to quantitative measurement, has remained largely unrewarding. The more adequate the attempts to account for a sequence of items, e.g., in a piece of music by calculating the probability of its occurrence, the more necessary it is to consider complex structural factors; and this complexity of order tends to make the calculation impracticable. (Arnheim, 1971, p. 16)

Nonetheless, according to Vilem Flusser's definition (2001, p. 12) '**The more improbable, the more informative**', art is radically informative.

Information is the mirror image of entropy, the reverse of the tendency of all objects (the objective world as a whole) to decay into more and more probable situations and finally into a formless, extremely probable²² situation. [...] The gesture of informing characteristically expresses the intention of a subject to negate the objective tendency toward entropy. One informs (produces improbable situations) to set spirit against material that tends, absurdly, toward heat death. Writing, like digging, presses this spirit into the object to inspire it, that is, to make it improbable. (Flusser, 2001, pp. 12-13)

The previous description of in-formation seems to associate materialistic and idealistic theoretical attitudes towards signification at the meeting point of the traditional conception; the representational artistic manifestation of an idea.

A more practical application of Flusser's conception of information is to be found during the process of artistic materialization of a project, where 'by grasping and working objects, the writer realizes that the reverse of the tendency to decay is his resistance to the spirit that wants to inform them: **the better a memory is, the more laborious it is to dig into it (e.g., bronze or marble); the easier it is to dig into it (e.g., clay), the more quickly the information dug into it will disappear**' (Flusser, 2001, p. 13).

By making modality judgements, i.e., trying to make sense of/interpret a text, one frequently finds himself (according to Jean Baudrillard's one-dimensional virtual reality) in a "**suspension of disbelief**", 'without compromising [one's] ability to distinguish representations from reality' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

A gradation of modality cues exists; 'writing, for instance, has a lower modality than film' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3), in which the gap between signifier and signified diminishes, making it seem to offer a "reflection of reality." Additionally, 'the power of language systems is that there is a very great **difference** between the signifier and the signified; the power of film is that there is not' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). Consequently, the distinction between the real and the copy disappears.

²² A further exploration of the relationship between probability, chance and freedom of will ('inscription is an expression of free will', Flusser, 2001, p. 14) is to be found in this paper's chapters about Richter and Xenakis.



Formal features

- 3D – flat
- detailed – abstract
- coloured – monochrome
- edited – unedited
- moving – still
- audible – silent

Content features

- possible – impossible
- plausible – implausible
- familiar – unfamiliar
- current – distant in time
- local – distant in space

Figure 1
Cornelius Gijsbrechts, 1670
A cabinet of curiosities with an ivory tankard
(showing reverse of cupboard door)
oil on canvas, Statens Museum for Kunst

In General Semantics' interpretation of the non-identity of sign and thing, an acceptance is sustained/embedded an acceptance that realities are structures which have authors and are thus capable to be evaluated and examined according to a level/degree of language's participation to (descriptive capability of) reality, actually acknowledging a climax from concrete reality to abstract generalization, i.e., **the levels of abstraction**.²³ 'General semantics sought to avoid the confusion of *higher logical types* with *lower logical types*. A "map" is of a higher (more general) logical type than "the territory", and linguistic representation in particular lends itself to this process of abstraction' (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

Moreover, the previous statement carries along issues of translation and interpretation; such is the case with the particularly abstract *logos* (λόγος) argued by Derrida. **'Understanding consists in the reduction of one type of reality to another'**²⁴ (Levi-Strauss, 1961; Chandler, 1994, ch. 3). Or, else, 'Signification is [...] nothing but [...] transposition from one level of language to another, from one language to a different language, and meaning is nothing but the possibility of such transcoding'²⁵ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

²³ The problematics of this terminology is discussed in the chapter about Bacon.

²⁴ In my multi-layered polyptychs I am trying to explore the ways of such transposition in practice.

²⁵ See this paper's chapter about Hiller (the rhythm of languages, the meter), as well as Plato's cave allegory.

10. Ricercare

Logos, traditionally, is spermatic (*σπερματικός*) (an *aporia* is always schematized in relation with *poros*) – a generative principle of the universe. Its *semantic field* extends beyond “word”²⁶.

Derrida objected that the metaphysical principle of logos and the interrelated metaphysics of presence were mistakenly taken as the origin of speech – a fundamental philosophical presumption. Instead, he theorized that *differance* is always active as iterability, inscription, or textuality, producing ‘what metaphysics call the sign (signified/signifier). [...] What defers presence [...] is the very basis on which presence is announced or desired in what represents it, its sign, its trace’ (Derrida, 2004, pp. 6-7).

It is crucial for the illustration of the *aporia* which is connected with the subject matter of *Presence and Representation* to further explore the synecdoches of Derrida’s thinking on **presence** (1997, p. 12):

... phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight as [*eidos*], presence as substance/essence/existence [*ousia*], temporal presence as point [*stigmè*] of the now or the moment [*nun*], the self presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth). Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence.

For Carl Gustav Jung (1982, p. 65), logos represented the masculine principle of rationality, in contrast to its female counterpart, *eros* (the son of Poros and Penia [Penia = a-poria]): ‘Woman’s psychology is founded on the principle of Eros, the great binder and loosener, whereas from ancient times the ruling principle ascribed to man is Logos. The concept of Eros could be expressed in

²⁶ (A) *the word or that by which the inward thought is expressed*, Lat. oratio; and (B) *the inward thought itself*, Lat. ratio.

A. Lat. vox, oratio: *that which is said or spoken*

I. *a word*, pl. *words*, i.e., *language, talk*

II. *a word, saying, statement*

2. *an assertion, promise*

3. *a resolution*

4. *a condition*

5. *a command*

III. *speech, discourse, conversation*

2. *right of speech, power to speak*

3. *talk about one, report, repute*, Lat. *fama*

4. *speech, language*

IV. *a saying, tale, story*, opp. *on the one hand, to mere fable* (μύθος), *on the other, to regular history* (ιστορία)

2. *a narrative*, and in pl. *histories, history*

V. *generally, prose-writing, prose*

VI. *a speech, oration*

VII. *like ῥήμα, the thing spoken of, the subject or matter of the λόγος*, attic

VIII. *that which is stated, a proposition, position, principle*: also = ορισμός, *a definition*

B. Lat. ratio: *thought, reason*

2. *an opinion, expectation*

3. *a reason, ground, plea*

4. ο λόγος αἰτέει, c. acc. et inf., *it stands to reason that...*, Lat. ratio evincit, **Hdt.**

II. *account, consideration, esteem, regard*

III. *due relation, proportion, analogy*

C. Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ, *the Logos or Word, comprising both senses of Thought and Word.*

(Liddell and Scott, *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon*, at www.perseus.tufts.edu)

Also, from the etymological root *λεχ-*: the *λέχ-ος*, *λέχ-ω*, (i.e., puerperal, put sb to bed) (Stamatakou lexicon, pp. 571, 576).

modern terms as psychic relatedness, and that of Logos as objective interest.’ The animus compensates eros, while the anima compensates logos²⁷ (Papadopoulos, 2006).

A consistent application of Derrida’s teachings in the present research would be to consider a completely different form of editing and presentation, examining a subject area that is itself always in change and in flux²⁸, i.e., an open compositional arrangement and elaboration (like a palimpsest or a multi-layered polyptych). Such a case would also be the neutralizing of oppositions and hierarchy: ‘It is not enough “simply to *neutralize* the binary oppositions of metaphysics.” We must recognize that, within the familiar philosophical oppositions, there is always “a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms controls the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), holds the superior position. To deconstruct the opposition is first [...] to overthrow the hierarchy”’ (Derrida, 1997, p. lxxvi).

Consequently, meaning is **endlessly deferred**, an ‘indefinite referral of signifier to signified’ (Chandler, 1994, p. 12; Derrida, 1978, p. 25). ‘This differance – being the structure (a structure never quite there, never by us perceived, itself **deferred and different**) of our psyche – is also the structure of “**presence**”, a term itself under erasure [~~presence~~]. For differance, producing the differential structure of our hold on “presence”, never produces presence as such’ (Derrida, 1997, p. xliii).

And, in a complementary mode, ‘In Roland Barthes’s words: “... to find in it [the object] certain mobile fragments whose differential situation engenders a certain meaning; the fragment has no meaning in itself, but it is nonetheless such that the slightest variation wrought in its configuration produces a change in the whole”’ (Derrida, 1997, p. lv). An analogy of such dynamics is to be found in the pictorial process of configuring schemes, colours, lines, etc.²⁹

11. Metaphor

An interrogation concerning the **process** of representation denotes the work of art as a metaphor (allegory, representation) that, for Friedrich Nietzsche, is the originary process of what the intellect presents as “truth.”

The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, develops its chief power in dissimulation [...] “A nerve-stimulus, first transcribed [*übertragen*] into an image [Bild]! First metaphor! The image again copied into a sound! Second metaphor! And each time he [the creator of language] leaps completely out of one sphere right into the midst of an entirely different one” [...] Nietzsche’s definition of metaphor seems to be the establishing of an identity between dissimilar things.³⁰ (Derrida, 1997, p. xxii)

The transition from metaphor to symbol demonstrates that ‘at symbol, relations are indistinct, because they are not clearly assembled, structured, articulated [διάρθρωσις] at the logical level. [...] [The symbol] rather assimilates [αφομοίωσις] than arrests logically a semblance/likeness’ (Ricoeur, 2002, p. 63).

²⁷ cf. Derrida, *Of grammatology*, p. lxv.

²⁸ A parallelism of it is the perception of concepts as subtle colours that are always subjected to the dynamics, potentiality and energy of light ⇔ viewpoint.

²⁹ Cf. my artwork *Sea*, the gestalt psychology, Paul Klee’s *Notebooks*.

³⁰ Cf. the statement that ‘true metaphors are untranslatable’ (Ricoeur, 2002, p. 57).

‘Interpretation is “the introduction of meaning” (or “deception through meaning” – *Sinnhineinlegen*), a making-sign that is a making-figure, for there is, in this thought, no possibility of a literal, true, self-identical meaning. **Identification** (*Gleich-machen*) **constitutes the act of figuration**’ (Derrida, 1997, p. xxiii).

According to Jacques Lacan, the constitution of the subject takes place within the play of metaphors and their deferment:

[...] a “subject” [...] can never be a “total personality,” the “exercise of whose function” is to be forever divided from the object of its desire (Lacan computes the structural relationships among need, demand for love, and desire), and to constitute itself in the distortive play of **metaphor** and **metonymy** – displacement and condensation – that forever distances the other, the object of its desire, from itself. (Derrida, 1997, p. lxii)

Translative economical loss³¹, i.e., the loss of “literary” meaning (see the next paragraph about the *proper* name), when, for example, translators ‘obliterated the word “pharmakon” by providing a collection of different words as its translated substitute’, is, for Derrida (1997, p. lxxxvii), ‘an effective deconstructive tool.’³² Furthermore, it ‘is not [...] a matter of inverting the literal meaning and the figurative meaning but of determining the “literal” meaning of writing as metaphoricity itself’ (Derrida, 1997, p. 15).

For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Derrida’s chief concern might be summarized thus: **to problematize the proper name and proper (literal) meaning, the proper in general**. [...] The argument points also to the theme of the play of desire around the proper name: The narcissistic desire³³ to make one’s own “proper” name³⁴ “common”, to make it enter and be at one with the body of the mother-tongue; and, at the same time, the oedipal desire to preserve one’s proper name, to see it as the analogon of the *name* of the father’³⁵ (Derrida, 1997, p. lxxxiv).

Thus the name, especially the so-called proper name, is always caught in a chain or a system of differences. It becomes an appellation only to the extent that it may inscribe itself within a figuration. Whether it be linked by its origin to the representations of things in space or whether it remains caught in a system of phonic differences or social classifications apparently released from ordinary space, the proper-ness of the name does not escape spacing. Metaphor shapes and undermines the proper name. The literal [*propre*] meaning does not exist, its “appearance” is a necessary function – and must be analyzed as such – in the systems of differences and metaphors. The absolute parousia of the literal meaning, as the presence to the self of the logos within its voice, in the absolute hearing-itself-speak, should be *situated* as a function responding to an indestructible but relative necessity, within a system that encompasses it. That amounts to *situating* the metaphysics or the ontotheology of logos. (Derrida, 1997, p. 89)

³¹ “‘If you augment language by one sign,” Saussure said, “you diminish in the same proportion the [value] of the others”’ (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 37).

³² In my opinion, this example clearly points to a fundamental policy strategy.

³³ Cf. the previously mentioned quotation of Danto.

³⁴ Cf. the signature/character debate, the Levi-Strauss narration mentioned in *Of grammatology*, and the magic beliefs related with language.

³⁵ Cf. Castoriadis’ discussion about the “prostitution” of words.

12. Epilogue like a prologue

Engaging art practice is a process which intrinsically infers to ‘a text [that] has as many meanings as it has readers’ (Flusser, 2001, p. 37). The compositional format of my polyptychs³⁶ descends from such an attitude, that is considered practically and theoretically open. Despite that openness, the notion of **centrality**/viewpoint is not in question, but it is related to a subject that shifts in space–time.

[...] What is a lineage in the order of discourse and text? If in rather conventional way I call by the name of *discourse* the present, living, conscious *representation* of a *text* within the experience of the person who writes or reads it, and if the text constantly goes beyond this representation by the entire system of its resources and its own laws, then the question of genealogy exceeds by far the possibilities that are at present given for its elaboration. We know that the metaphor that would describe the genealogy of a text correctly is *forbidden*. In its syntax and its lexicon, in its spacing, by its punctuation, its lacunae, its margins, the historical appurtenance of a text is never a straight line. (Derrida, 1997, p. 101)

Practically, this strategy of elaboration and analysis points to a cyclicity, or self-reflexivity (*αναστοχασμός* [*anastochasmos*])³⁷, that is reiterated in Derrida’s cadenza (1997, p. 141): **‘We are dispossessed of the longed-for presence in the gesture of language by which we attempt to seize it.’**

This modus can be directly applied in art practice in the same way as writing, for Derrida (1997, p. 9), describes the manner that we understand language; ‘we say “writing” for all that gives rise to an inscription³⁸ in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural “writing”.’

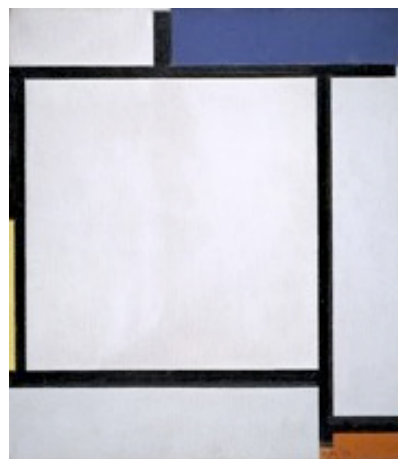


Figure 2
Piet Mondrian, 1922,
*Composition with blue,
black, yellow, and red*,
oil on canvas, 39.5 x 34.7 cm

A semiotical examination is exemplified in the prologue of the book *Art since 1900*, where Yves-Alain Bois surveys Piet Mondrian’s work (see Figure 2), who had ‘limited the corpus of possible pictorial marks within his system, but this very limitation immensely accrued their “value”’ (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 38). For Roland Barthes, ‘permutation and combination are the means by which any discourse is generated and as such they constitute the two main aspects of what [is] called the “structuralist activity”’. In these two canvases, Mondrian checks, just as a scientist would do, if and how our perception of a central square changes according to the modifications of its surroundings’ (Foster *et al.*, 2004, p. 39).

³⁶ Cf. Foster, 2004, p. 46.

³⁷ The archetype of this process is *Ouroboros*, an ancient symbol depicting a serpent or dragon eating its own tail. It comes from the Greek words *οὐρά* [*ourá*], meaning “tail”, and *βόρος* [*boros*], meaning “eating”, thus “he who eats his tail”.

³⁸ Cf. Vilém Flusser’s *Does writing have a future?*.

In this chapter, which is dedicated to the theoretical context of my research, a choice of some key ideas that elucidate the development of my art practice have been presented. This cadenza-like choice of presentation is in synch but distinct from the Derridean *trace* dictum, according to which ‘The trace is in fact the absolute origin of **sense**³⁹ in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the differance which opens appearance [*l’apparaître*] and signification’ (Derrida, 1997, p. 65).

In contrast to this negation of absolute origin is the conception of signification not by means of a sign but by means of a symbol.⁴⁰ ‘The Center is before all else the origin, the point of departure of all things; it is the principal point, without form, without dimensions, therefore indivisible, and consequently the only image that can be given to primordial Unity’ (Guénon, 2001, p. 57).

The social consequences emanating from the different comprehensions of presence, representation and the real are reflections of different viewpoints and theses; ‘[...] reality does not exist independently of signs, turning our critical attention to the issue of *whose* realities are privileged in particular representations – a perspective which, avoiding a retreat to subjectivism, pays due tribute to the unequal distribution of power in the social world’ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

This differentiation of viewpoint towards the sign (i.e., *simulacra*) has been condensed by Jean Baudrillard in three forms:

- **counterfeit** (imitation) – ‘when there was still a direct link between signifiers and their signifieds;’
- **production** (illusion) – ‘when there was an indirect link between signifier and signified;’
- **simulation** (fake) – ‘when signifiers came to stand in relation only to other signifiers and not in relation to any fixed external [?] reality’⁴¹ (Chandler, 1994, ch. 3).

According to Baudrillard, the successive phases of the image⁴² are the following:

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.⁴³ (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 170).

On the whole, my personal stance on the subject matter is attuned to Giorgio Agamben’s analysis, and especially to his viewpoint (1999, p. 101) according to which ‘Man has on earth a poetic status, because **it is *poiesis* that founds for him the original space of his world.**’

³⁹ Cf. some of Gilles Deleuze’s ideas discussed in the correspondent chapter (2.1.).

⁴⁰ Cf. the previously cited description by Carl Gustav Jung.

⁴¹ Cf. Baudrillard’s interpretation (1994) of ‘representations as a means of concealing the absence of reality’ (i.e., the *simulacra*).

⁴² I present Baudrillard’s observations about painting in detail in this report’s chapters about Richter.

⁴³ Cf. the *απεικασμα*, Foster, 2004.

B) IMAGES



Image 1
Untitled, 1996, oil on cardboard, 70 x 50 cm



Image 2
Untitled, 2003, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm



Image 3
Untitled, 2003, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm



Image 4
Untitled, 2003, oil on canvas, 170 x 100 cm



Image 5
Untitled, 2004, clay, scale 1:5



Image 6
Untitled, 2007, plaster, 80 x 70 x 5 cm

Polyptych I



Image 7
Polyptych I, 2008, oil paint and carving on wood, tree trunk, nails, 200 x 180 x 100 cm

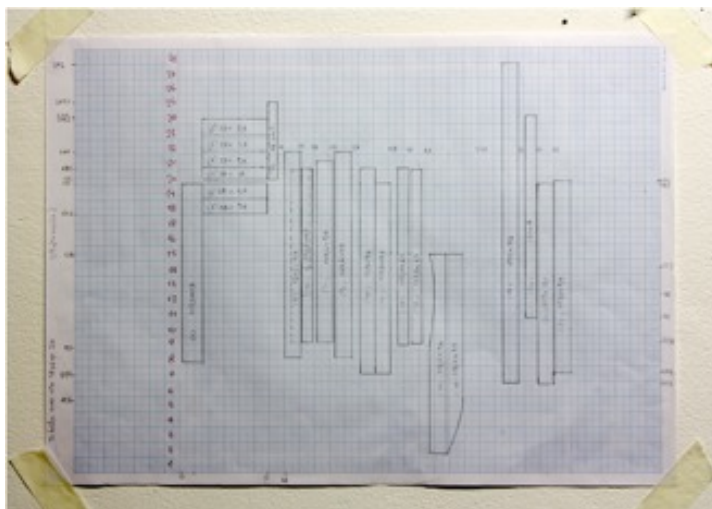


Image 8
Preparatory drawing of the
composition and rhythm of the work
Polyptych I, 2008, pencil and pen
on millimeter paper



Image 9
Polyptych I (detail), 2008,
detail of the carved and painted
wooden elements of the work,
oil paint and carving on wood



Image 10
Polyptych I (detail), 2008, detail
of the trunk with surfacing resin



Image 11
Untitled, 2008, charcoal and curving on paper, 72 x 38 cm

Polptych II



.....painted panels.....

.....the in between space.....

.....painted panels.....

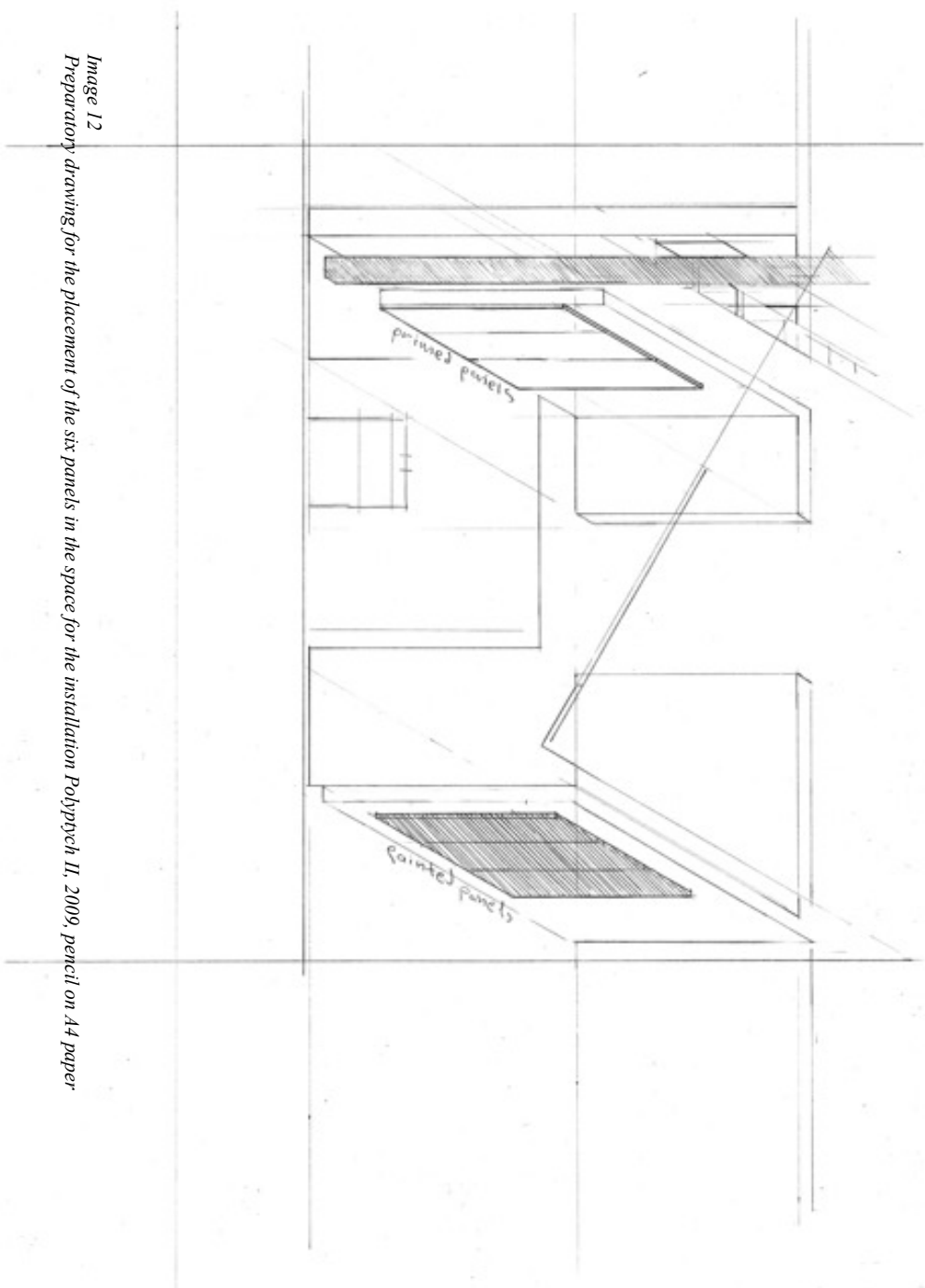


Image 12
Preparatory drawing for the placement of the six panels in the space for the installation Polypych II, 2009, pencil on A4 paper



Image 13
Polypych II (part of the installation), 2009, the three painted panels: oil paint, carving, cutting and screws on mdf wood, 300 cm x 200 cm x 9 mm



Image 14
Polyptych II (part of the installation), 2009, the three primed panels: acrylic primer and screws on mdf wood, 300 cm x 200 cm x 9 mm



Image 15
Polypnych II (detail), 2009



Image 16
Polypnych II (detail), 2009



Image 17
Polypych II (detail), 2009



Image 18
Polypych II (detail), 2009

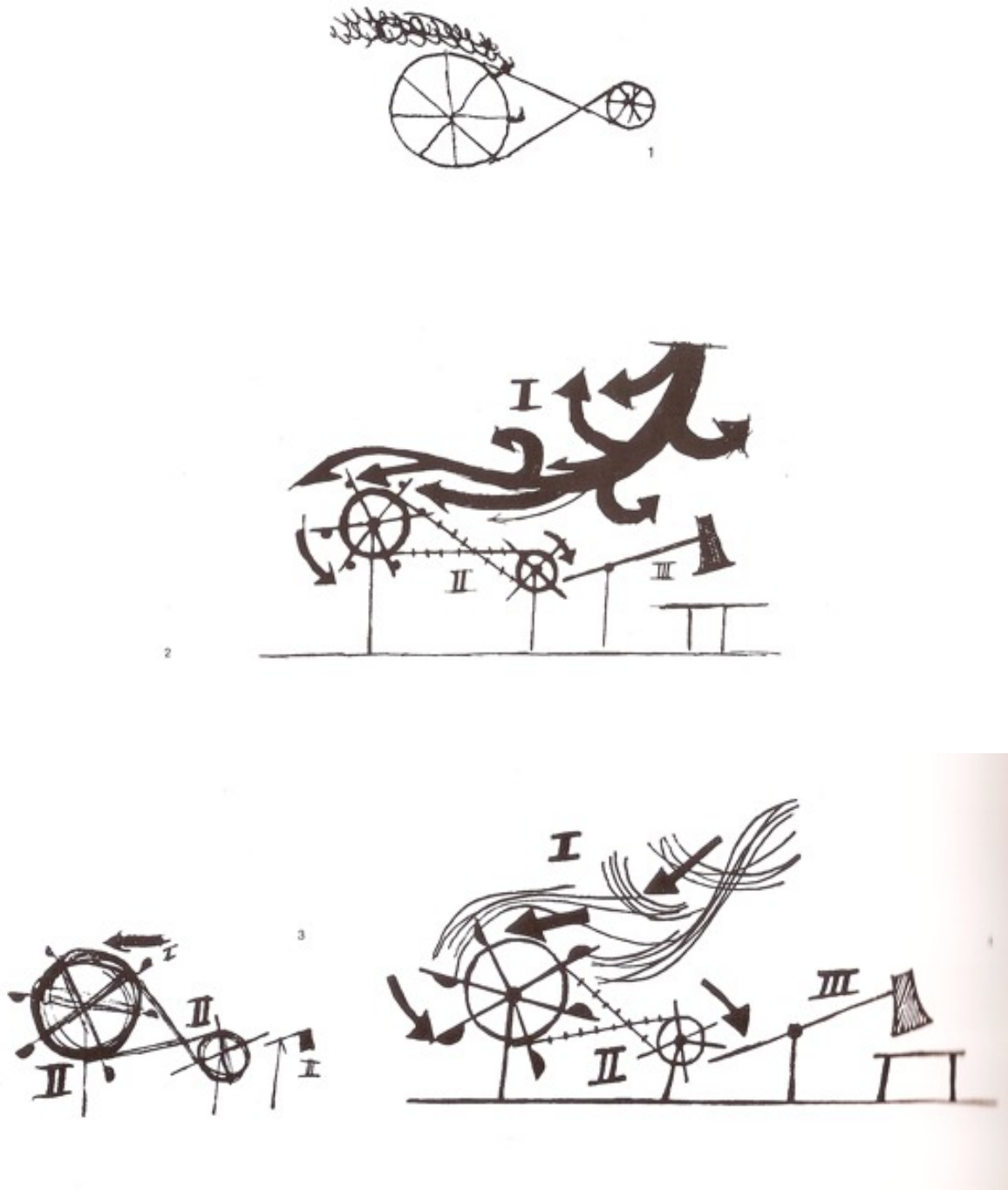


Image 19
 Paul Klee , 1920, the watermill example of the function of pictorial language,
 taken from his Notebooks: *The thinking eye*, *The nature of nature*



Image 20
Morandi's studio in Via Fondazza, 1981

12.77

Native earths and calcined native earths



(*red ochre is ochre heated until it turns red)

blacks

native magnetic oxides and blacks made of ground shale were probably used. lamp black is black from soot or carbon obtained by burning oils or fats and has been in use since the earliest periods; ivory black is a variety of bone black obtained from burning bone.



Image 21
Susan Hiller; Fragments, 1976-77, monochrome chart A4, A3

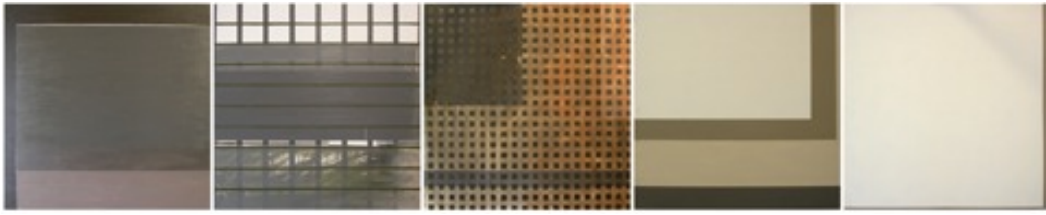


Image 22
Work in progress: an early stage of the Polyptych London 80 x 405 cm



Image 23
Work in progress: a stage following the stage of Figure 6 with revised technic, materials and composition



Image 24
Work in progress: revision of technic, materials and composition



Image 25
The site where Polyptych II was placed

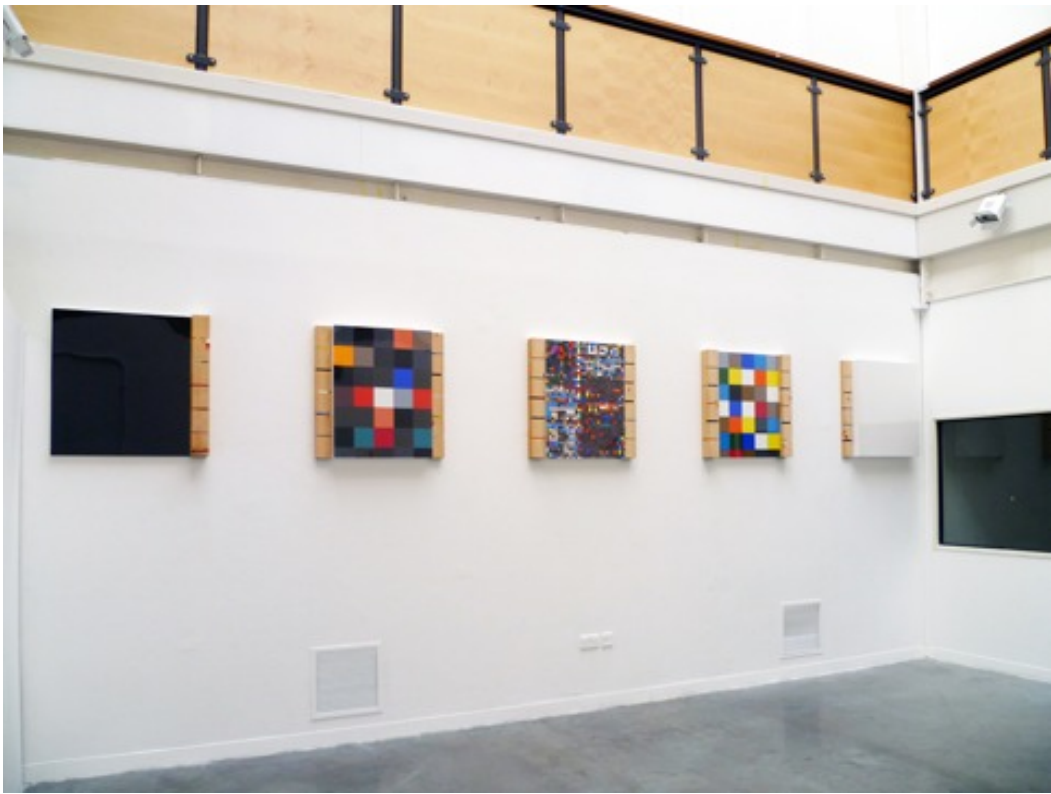


Image 26
*Polyptych III, acrylic gouache, wood, perspex, carving on wood,
 5 pieces: 80 x 80 x 10.5 cm (width x height x max depth)*

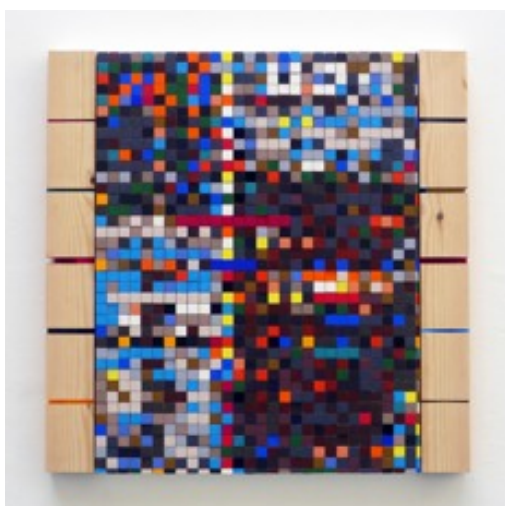


Image 27
Polyptych III, acrylic gouache, wood, perspex, carving
on wood, 80 x 80 x 10.5 cm, (width x height x depth)

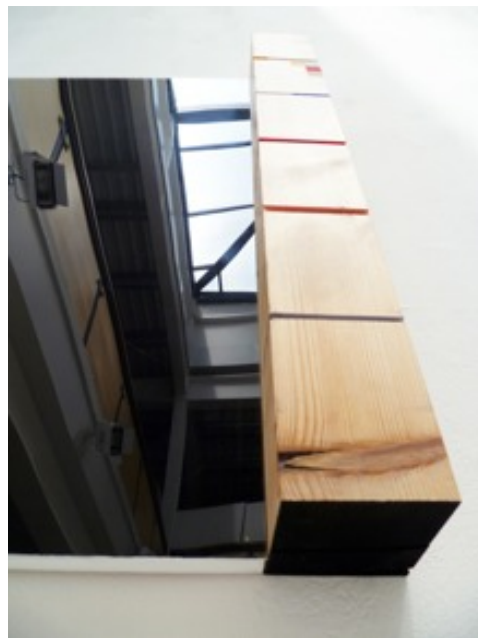


Image 28
Details of Polyptych III, acrylic gouache, wood, perspex, carving on wood



Image 29
Detail of Polyptych III, acrylic gouache, wood, perspex, carving on wood



Image 30
Elaborated marble for the projection of the Seaframes

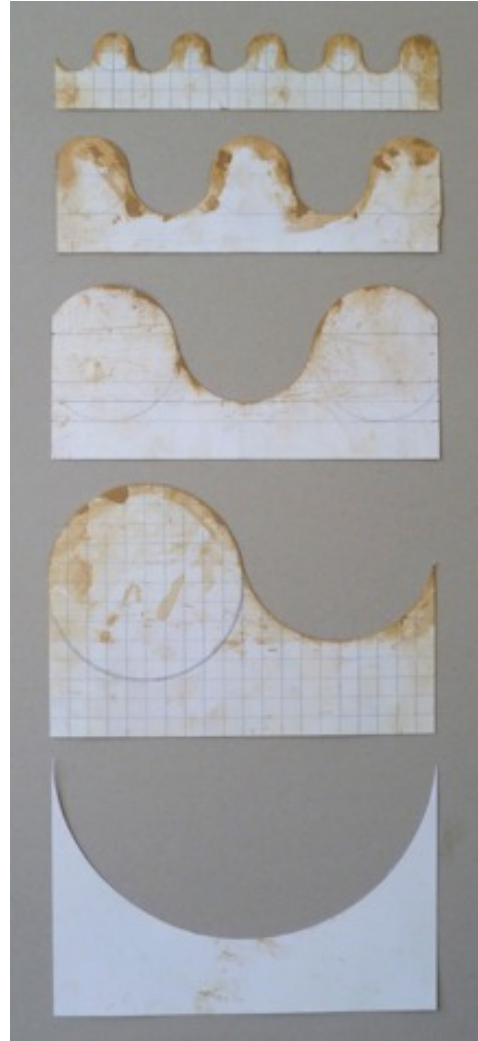


Image 31
*Polyptych IV, 2011, plaster, paper, digital colour print,
 5 pieces, 20 x 20 x <10 cm*



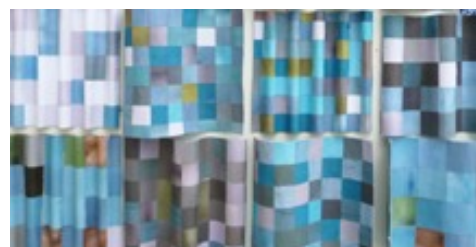
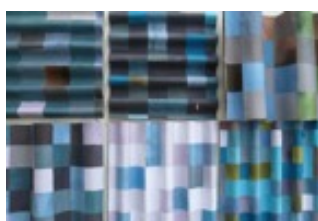
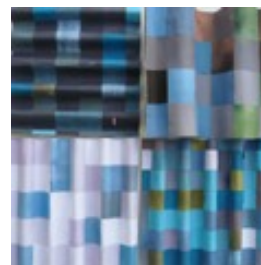
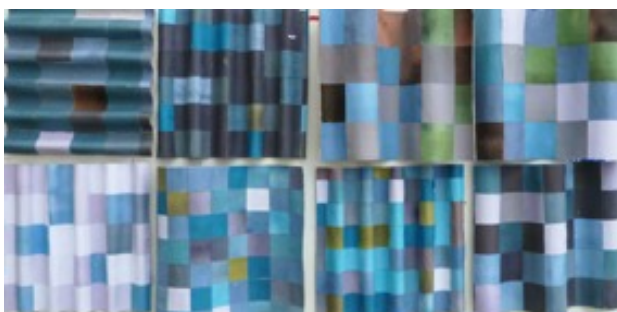
Image 32
The printed and cut papers for the Polyptych IV,
5, 4.5, 4, 3.5, 3 cm



Image 33
The five units of the Polyptych IV made of molded paper
(paper, acrylic adhesive), 20 x 20 cm



Image 34
Polyptych IV, 2011, plaster, paper, digital colour print, 20 x 20 x <10 cm



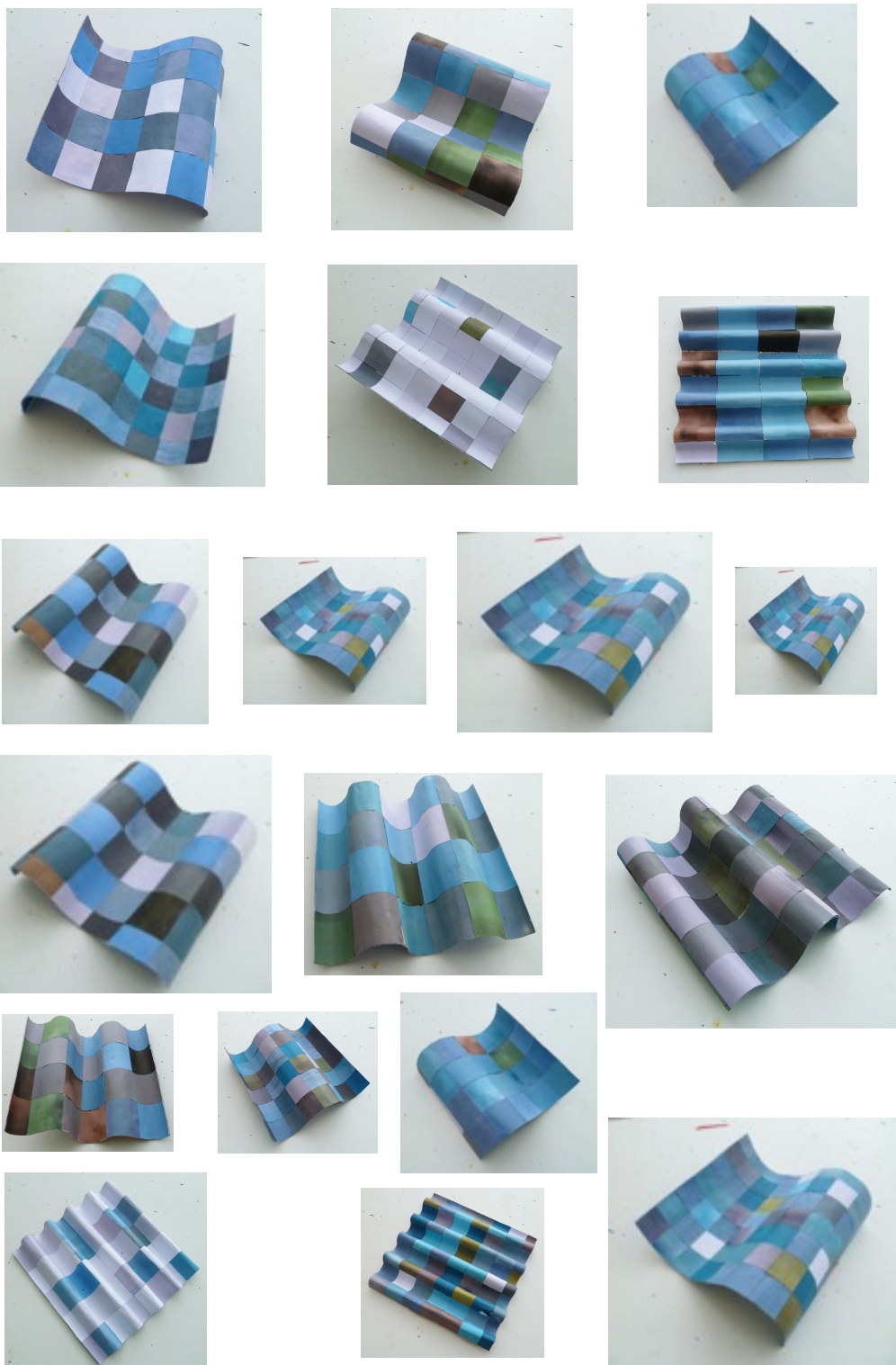


Image 35
Polyptych IV, 2011, plaster, paper, digital colour print, 20 x 20 x <10 cm



Image 36
Polyptych V, 2011, in situ installation, wooden construction, digital printing

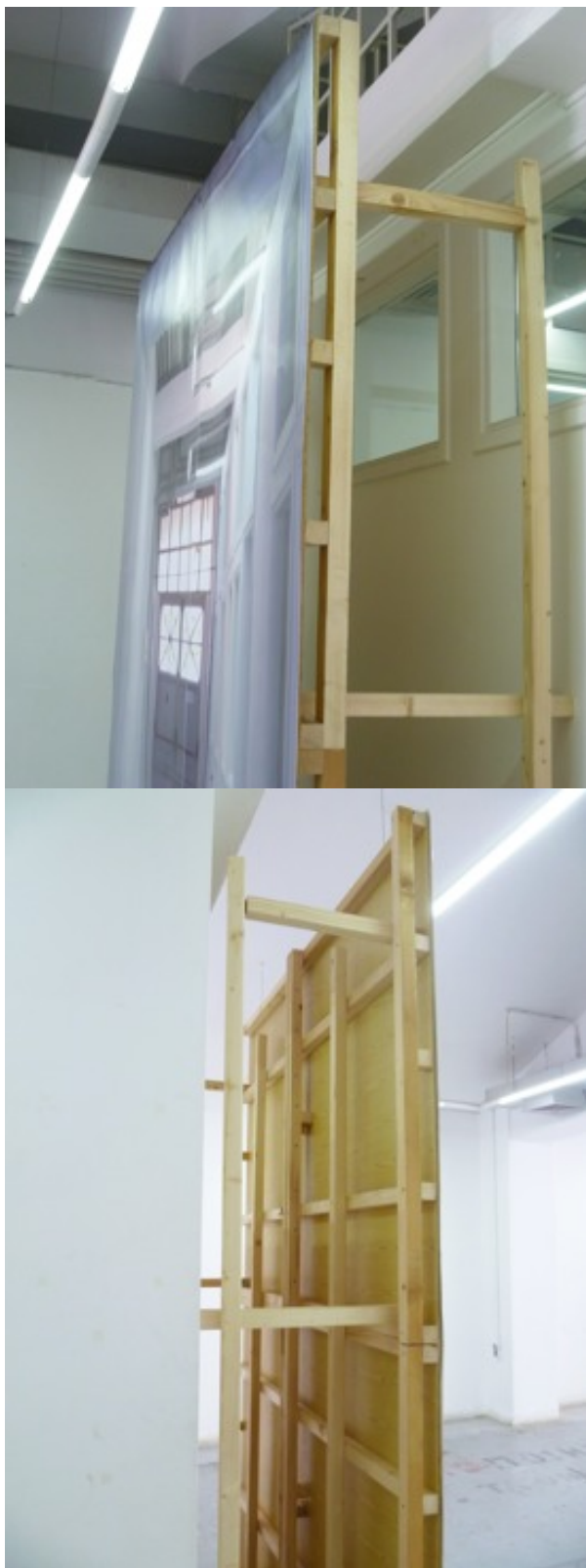


Image 37
Polyptych IV, 2011, plaster,
paper, digital colour print,
20 x 20 x <10 cm

Palette series



Image 38
7 Vessels, 2011, glass vessels, water, acrylic paint, each vessel 12 cm



Image 39
7 Bells, 2011, iron, the bigger bell approximately: 18 x 17 x 7 cm



Image 40
Pebbles, 2011, pebbles, A4 pebble-text arrangement

Horizons series

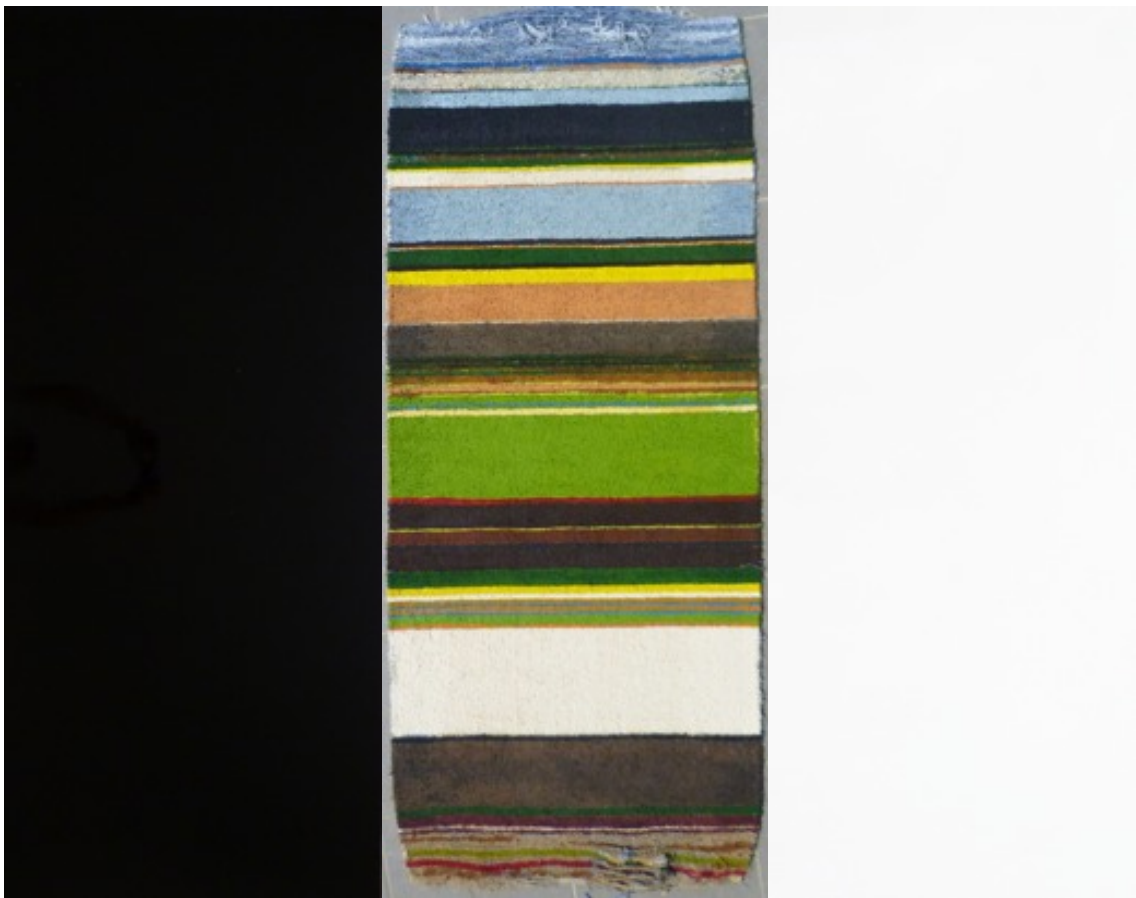


Image 41

Horizons 1, 2011, wood, carpet, acrylic paint, varnish, 160 cm x 68 cm x 3



Image 42
Horizons II, 2011, acrylic paint, iron, car paint, carpet, 150 cm x 91 cm x 3

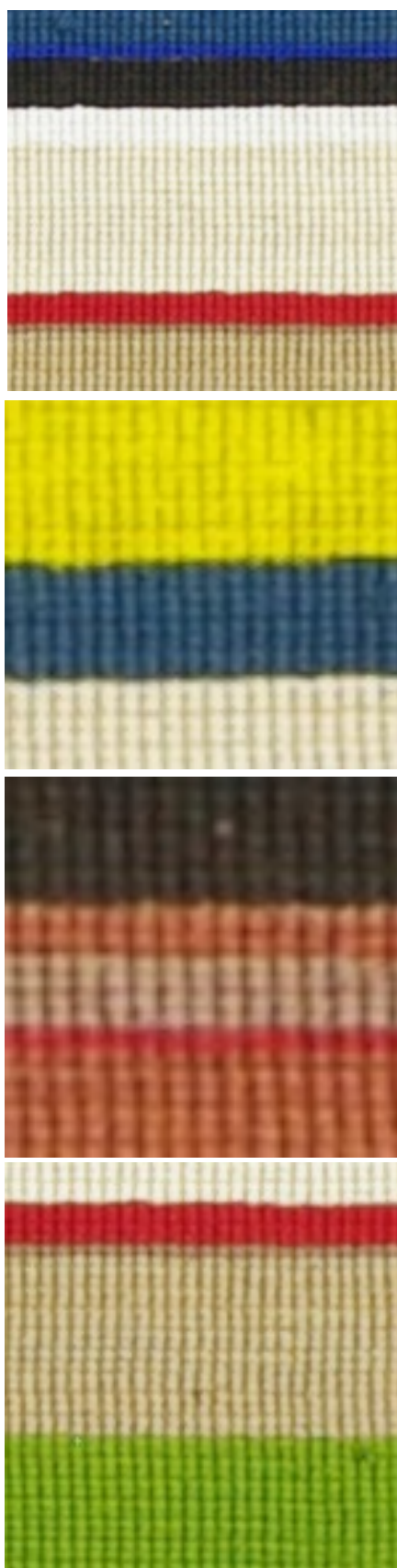


Image 43
Details of Horizons II, 2011,
acrylic paint on carpet



Image 44
Pohrwach VI, 2012. oil on wood. 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)



Image 45
Polyptych VI, 2012, oil on wood, 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)



Image 46
Polypych VI, 2012, oil on wood, 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)



Image 47
Polypych VI, 2012, oil on wood, 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)



Image 48
Polyptych VI, 2012, oil on wood, 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)



Image 49
Polypych VI, 2012, oil on wood, 30 x 30 x 10 cm (work in progress)



Image 50
Polypych VI, 2012, oil on wood, 40 x 40 x 1 cm (work in progress)

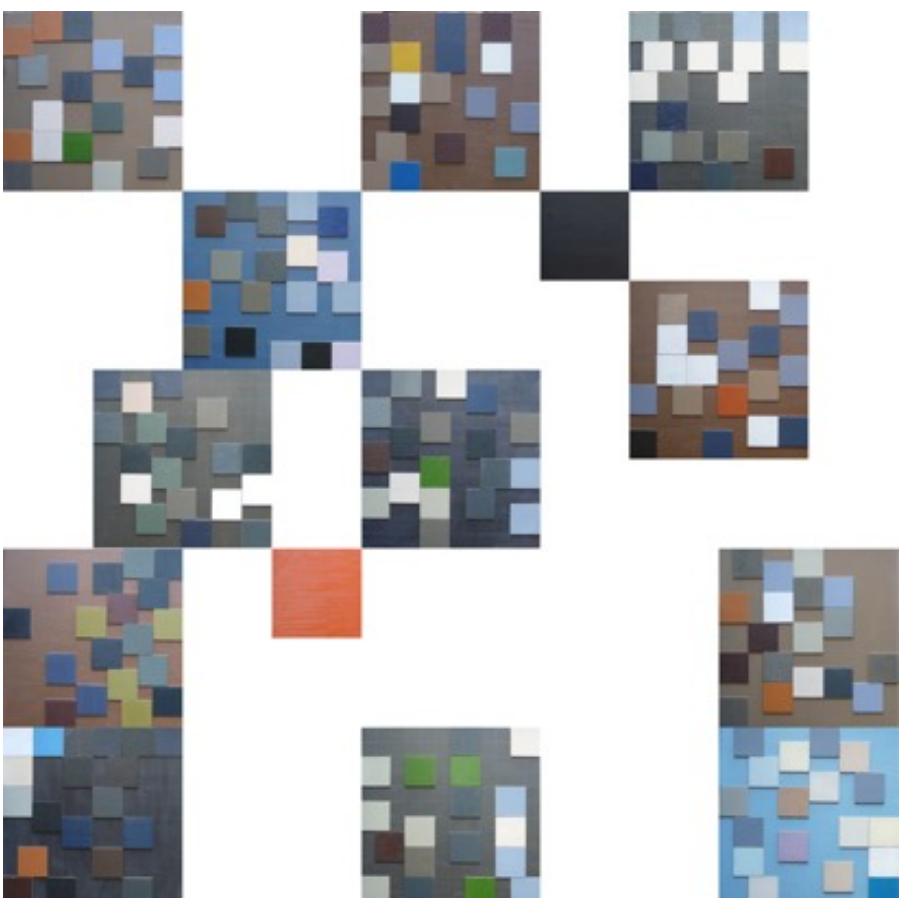


Image 51

Polypych VII, 2012, oil on wood, 12 pieces 40 x 40 x 1 cm and 2 pieces 20 x 20 x 1 cm



Image 52
Views of the 2012 D.F.A final exhibition in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the School of Arts and Digital Industries

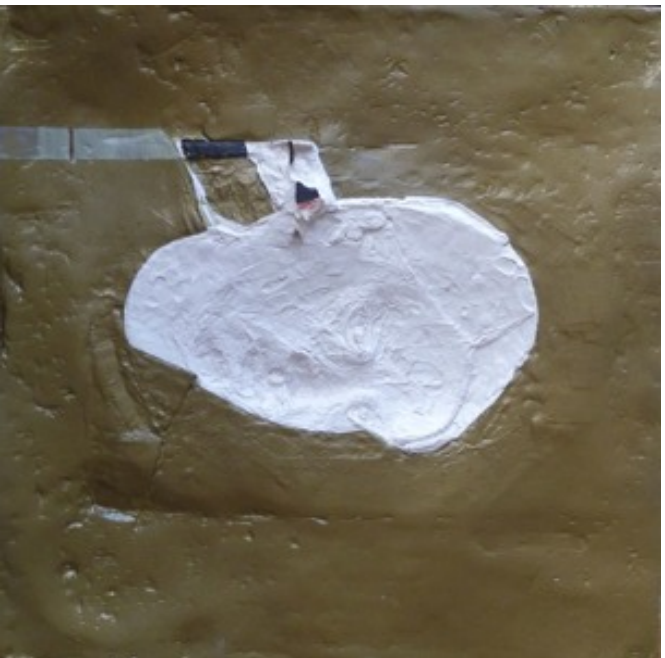


Image 53
Polýptych VIII, 2012, plaster, oil colour, 40 x 40 x <10 cm



Image 54
Polypych VIII, 2012, plaster, oil colour, 40 x 40 x <10 cm